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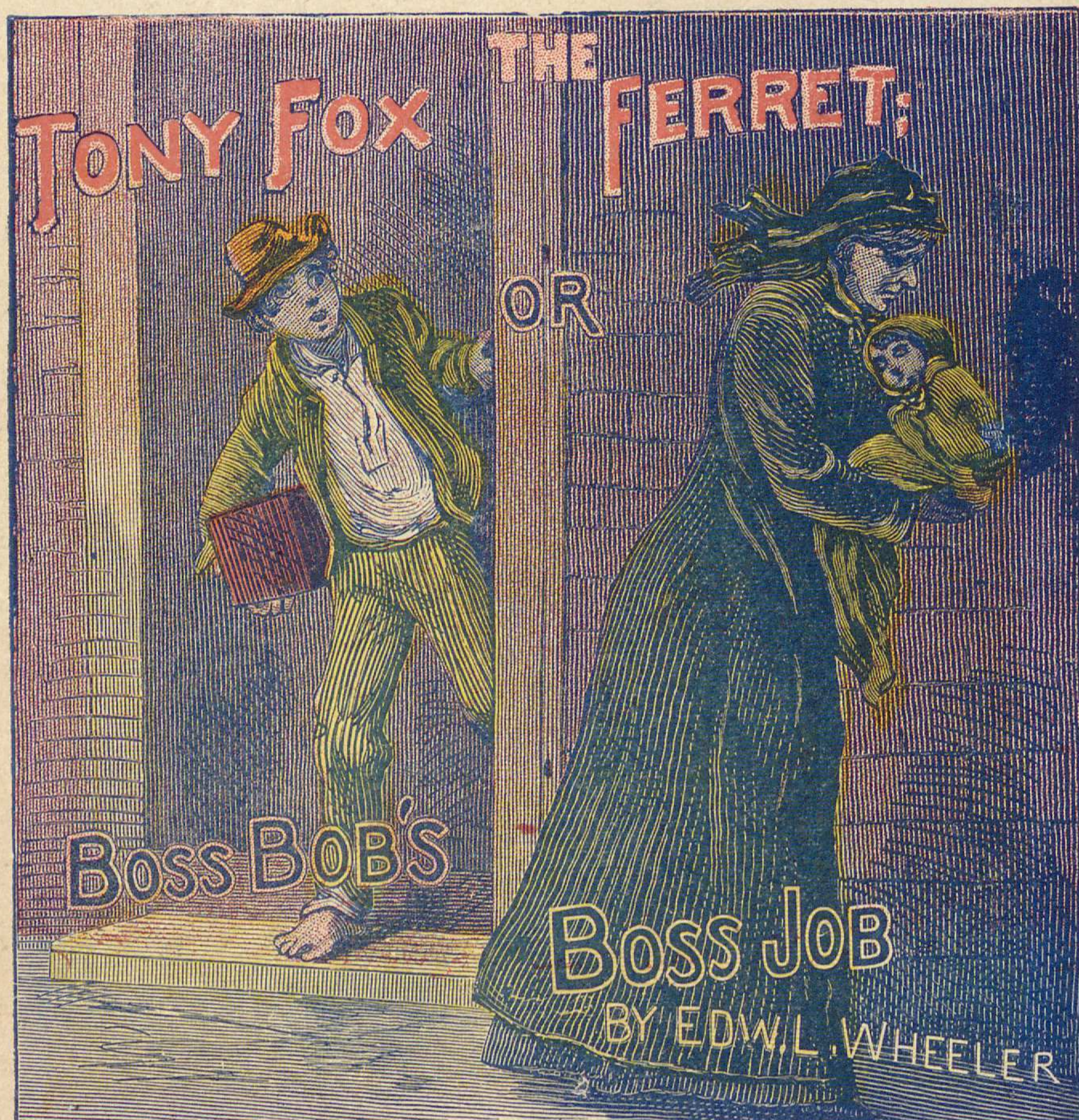
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M. J. IVERS & CO., Publishers,
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Vol. III.



WHATEVER WAS THE WOMAN'S ERRAND, SHE WALKED ON RAPIDLY, AND BOSS BOB HAD A MODERATE SIZED JOB TO KEEP HER IN SIGHT.

EDWARD L. WHEELER'S DEADWOOD DICK, JR., NOVELS

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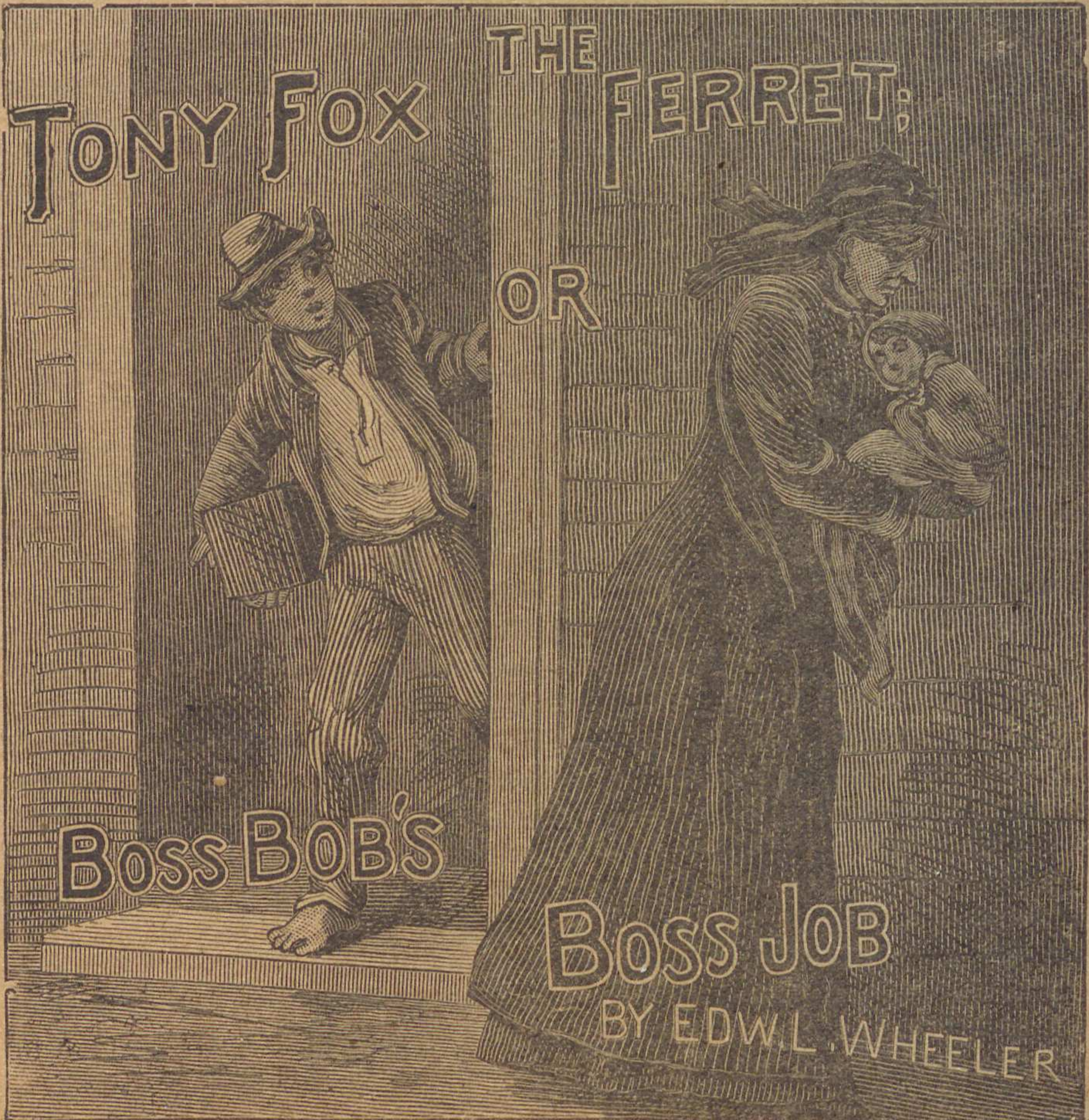
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WHATEVER WAS THE WOMAN'S ERRAND, SHE WALKED ON RAPIDLY, AND BOSS BOB HAD A MODERATE-SIZED JOB TO KEEP HER IN SIGHT.

Tony Fox, the Ferret;

OR,

Boss Bob's Boss Job.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," "ROSEBUD
BOB," "GILT-EDGED DICK," "BONANZA
BILL," ETC., ETC.

PROLOGUE.

SCENE—The death-bed of a young mother, in a cheerless, poor y-furnished room of a tenement house.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—The pale wreck of a once pretty woman, upon the pillows; a grave-looking physician standing near; a middle-aged Frenchwoman standing by the bedside, holding in her arms a six-months-old babe.

"Felice," spoke the dying mother; then she sunk back wearily, her attempt to raise herself proving futile.

The Frenchwoman knelt by the bedside, and leaned nearer to her.

"Yes, ma'm'selle," she said, in an anxious voice.

"Felice, I am going," the other whispered, faintly. "I cannot tell you all I would like to, but you know all that is necessary. You have the directions where to take my child! You will do it, Felice—you will do as I have directed you?"

"Yes, ma'm'selle."

"God bless you for those words," the dying woman gasped, her face lighting up with the joyous gratitude she felt. "I know you will, for you have been true and faithful to me—the only true and faithful friend I have known for many months. Have you seen Frank to-day, Felice?"

"Yes, ma'm'selle. He was hanging about the saloon, on the next corner, very, very drunk. He did not recognize me as I passed him by."

A pained expression flitted into the dying woman's face.

"May God forgive him, as I already have," she murmured. "I always believed he would have been a different man but for liquor, Felice. Ah!—a—ah! it is coming. The baby, Felice!"

The Frenchwoman held the baby forward, and the poor mother kissed it, passionately, o'er and o'er again, tears streaming over her face.

Then a radiant light dawned into her pale, pinched face, and she sunk back upon the pillows, the last tide of life ebbing peacefully out.

The physician came forward and gazed upon her pityingly, at the same time feeling her pulse, which throbbed no more.

"It is all over," he said. "The strange tenacity with which she clung to life, considering the complicated disease, was something remarkable. Do you take charge of the remains?"

The Frenchwoman shook her head.

"No, monsieur. I have no money—no friends. You will have to take charge."

"Very well. I will see that she has a clean

spot in Woodland," the physician said. "If you are through, you will be excused."

The woman nodded; her willingness to be excused was apparent.

She bundled the child up in an old shawl and adorned herself with a waterproof cloak and hat, and left the room.

Through a hallway, she went, blindly, for it was pitch dark, and down a pair of creaking stairs into a sort of lower vestibule. Here she stopped.

The dim outlines of a man's form blocked her passage, and something glistening, held near her face, caused her to shudder.

"Is it you, Felice?" a low, hoarse voice said.

"Yes, it's me," the Frenchwoman replied, evidently recognizing him. "What do you want?"

"I want to know about Adele. How is she getting along?"

"She is dead, monsieur."

"Ah! then I am free," and something like a chuckle seemed to escape the man. "What have you in your arms, Felice?"

"The child—poor thing."

"Bah! what are you going to do with it, now?"

"Take it where I was directed to."

"Where was that, Felice?"

"None of your business, monsieur. I was not to tell."

"Humph! there's no use of asking you, I suppose, then. Drown the brat in the Delaware, Felice. It were better dead than alive, and motherless upon the pitiless, uncharitable world. And then I'll make it worth your while."

"In what way, monsieur?"

"In cash—half of what I get for the body—over a hundred."

"The body?" the Frenchwoman gasped in horror.

"Yes. I'm going to sell the body up-stairs to the students. It is worth something, an' I may as well get something for it as to let the worms dissect it."

Felice shuddered again.

"You are ze great villain, monsieur," she hissed, suddenly stepping closer to him, "but I will do as you say, if you will promise me that you will give me the hundred dollars."

"I promise that," was the grim reply. "I want the child safe out of the way. D'ye hear—there must be no half-way business about it."

The Frenchwoman's eyes glittered, and she squeezed the little innocent in her arms until it screamed with pain.

"I understand, monsieur," she replied. "The child shall never live to see you again."

Then she pushed past him and descended into the dark, narrow, ill-smelling street, into which the rain fell in a steady, monotonous drizzle, accompanied by a murkiness that made breathing difficult.

CHAPTER I.

BOSS BOB STRIKES A TRAIL AND CAPTURES A
"RESPONSIBILITY."

"DUNNO w'ot rain was ever made fer 'cept et was ter make mud fer us o' ther legitemate perfesh ter clean off. But w'en a feller's bin

sleepin' on ther soft side o' a doorstep fer a hull week o' nights, an' et's rained nigh ev'ry night, it's gittin' too thin. Wonder ef eny one's stirrin' w'ot's got a nickel they want ter squander on a shine?"

It was several hours before daylight one drizzling Centennial morning, and Philadelphia lay in repose—the only rest it knew being in the darkest hour before the dawn, that year of '76. The speaker, a ragged, dirty, saucy-looking specimen of the bootblack fraternity, had risen from a place of ensconcement in one of the broad doorways upon South street, and was surveying the moist, dreary aspect, critically, while he fished a half-smoked cigarette from his pocket and lit it.

"Thar'll be a big run o' biz, ter-day, up around ther Centenyal agency," he muttered. "Folks w'ot's got a spark o' patriotic enthusiasm in their compersition w'u'd rather go wi'out their dinner than tread ther memorial aisles wi' muddy feet. Pity every one ain't a patriot-feeler. W'ot a bonanza we o' ther purfeshun would have, then!"

Ceaselessly, monotonously did the rain drizzle down, and seeing no prospect of its stopping immediately the young Bootblack King squatted contentedly upon his upturned box, and puffed away at the end of his cigarette.

"Spect how's I ain't a-goin' ter accept sech lodgings as these, much longer," he soliloquized, gazing up and down the dusky street, and the frowning buildings on either side of it. "I aspire ter a first-class mansion, I do, wi' brass knocker on ther door, an' a peanner in ther parlor. Ther collatteral is w'ot's lackin', howsumiever, an' w'en a feller wants it, he ain't got it. Blame me fer a fool, ef I ever put a foot within the Maloney domysil ag'in. Coaxin' got me thar, till they got all my filthy lucre coraled, an' then the parental Maloney sed, 'D'ye be afther bouncin', ye ownmannerly omadhaun.' An' I bounced, minus my dudads. But, pshaw! there's no use ter mourn over mice. Ef Boss Bob hain't got no swag, he's still got his repurtashun, which ain't small. Et's severil months yit, till ther end uv ther Centenyal, an' I'll bet a clam I raise sum sort o' a boom yit, as will fetch me up er peg in ther world. Wi' w'at p'int I know, an' ther p'int I intend ter know, I ain't goin' ter stop much short o' bein' Mayor, or Chief o' Perlice, you bet on it. Hello! who's up?"

The unmistakable click! click! of ironed bootheels upon the brick pavement announced the fact that some person was approaching, and Boss Bob, the King of Bootblacks, peered from his impromptu lodgings, which aroused curiosity.

"Guess somebody's tuk sick," he muttered, contemplatively, as he discovered a dusky figure coming down the street through the grayish gloom, "an' a doctor's what's wanted. Humph! et's a woman, too. Thet luks suspicious, swaller me fer a Jersey clam ef it don't. Reckon somethin's up."

And with this conclusion, he drew carefully back out of sight.

The woman was approaching swiftly, her plated heels beating a musical tattoo upon the sidewalk. She carried a shawl-wrapped bundle in her arms, and her own form was enveloped in a waterproof, and her face veiled.

She passed the doorway where Boss Bob was crouching, and hurried on without discovering him.

After she had passed, the Bootblack King gazed after her.

"I'll bet high there's somethin' wrong about that craft," he mused; "she's got somethin' wrapped up in thet shawl, w'at she's took ther cover o' darkness ter smuggle away. 'Spect et's my duty ter mog along in the rear, and make observations. Ef Nondescript was heer I'd send him an' stay in ther dry. But Nondescript ain't present so I reckon I'm elected ter play tag."

He slung his blacking kit to his back, and leaving the doorway, stole cautiously along after the woman. His feet being bare he was able to follow without awaking a sound audible to the party he was pursuing.

"Thet's whar nature beats invention all holler," he chuckled, as he gazed at his muddy pedal extremities. "Ther chap w'ot invented boots thought he'd done it up brown, an' boots ain't a bad thing in winter, thet's a fact; but they ain't no good if ye'r goin' on a reglar Buffalo Bill war-path. 'Sides, they keep ther understandin' from developin' ter et's proper dermenshuns. But thet female is headin' fer ther Delaware. Wonder ef she's goin' ter hook oysters?"

Whatever was the woman's errand, she walked on rapidly, and Boss Bob had a moderate-sized job to keep her in sight.

Presently the street grew descending, and the sullen, muddy waters of the River Delaware loomed into view.

Turning into Delaware avenue, the woman walked southward along the wharves, until she came to a pier where a large number of skiffs and row-boats were moored.

Here she paused and glanced around.

Boss Bob dodged into a shadow just in time to escape observation, not more than a dozen yards from where she had paused.

"But she's got a infant," he mused, as he saw her deposit the bundle in the bottom of a boat. "Mebbe she's goin' ter set it adrift, too. Hum! ho! et won't be ther furst sech case I've heard on. Bet a shuck eyster ther young kid's bound for Davy Jones's locker, ef I don't put in er protest."

It was apparent that the woman intended to set the bundle afloat upon the Delaware, in the boat, as the Bootblack King had surmised, for she untied it from its fastenings, and with a pike-pole, pushed it swiftly out into the stream.

The receding tide carried it further and further into the stream, until it was nearly lost from view—then the woman turned and fled up a narrow street, as if all the fiends incarnate were at her heels.

Boss Bob watched her flight, a rather doubtful expression upon his face.

"Dunno ef I better give chase, or rescue ther infunt," he muttered. "Reckon et'd be best ter git ther kid, an' let ther other slide. Infunts ain't in my line o' biz, but I allow I'd better take er hand in this little game."

Unfastening another of the boats, he hastily sprung in, and pulled rapidly out into the stream in the direction whence he had last seen

the drifting boat, but making allowances for the set of the current.

But despite this fact, he missed his mark, and failed to get a glimpse of it through the gloom that hung over the river.

"Guess I'm stuck, arter all," he soliloquized, a little dubiously, as he rested on his oars. "Thet's ther hang o' infants, ennyhow. W'en ye want 'em ter sing out, so ye can find, they won't make a bit o' noise, an' w'en ye don't want 'em to vocalize they'll make ther welkin ring. Ef that parcel in the driftin' boat would only yell out, I'd soon find it. 'Spect I'll hev ter wait till mornin' dawns tho'."

It appeared to be the better idea, and shipping his oars, he allowed his boat to drift at the will of the waves.

He had not long to wait for morning to dawn, for it soon grew perceptibly light over the housetops of the great city.

Light and lighter it grew, until it was fairly daylight, and signs and sounds of activity were noticeable on both the Jersey and Pennsylvania shores.

Then Boss Bob aroused from the half doze he had fallen into, and dipping his oars, glanced sharply around him. Some distance down the river he spied the truant boat, drifting along with the current, and he accordingly braced himself, and seizing the oars, sent his own appropriated craft flying swiftly in pursuit.

It did not take long to overhaul the boat, and make her fast, and then the Bootblack King took a peep into the bundle, and found it to contain a pretty six-months-old baby, a little girl, evidently, judging by its dainty features.

Probably it had been given something to make it sleep, for it breathed regularly, and so leaving it lay, Boss Bob re-entered his own boat, and pulled for the South street wharves. He was not long in approaching the pier from which he had appropriated his craft, and saw several persons congregated there, among whom was a burly policeman.

"Humph! bet a clam they reckon I'm goin' ter git locked up fer usin' uther chaps' property," Bob muttered. "They'll git fooled tho'. Ef a feller can't reskoo infants, 'thout bein' 'rested fer it, I'll quit blackin' boots an' retire frum ther perfeshion."

By this time the boats were alongside the pier, and raising the bundled infant in his arms, Bob leaped lightly ashore.

"Aha! you young Arab! So you're the rascal who stole my boats, eh?" cried the owner, who stood hard by. "Arrest him, officer; he run off with my boats, without leave or license."

"Bet a clam I ain't a-goin' ter be arrested," Boss Bob replied, coolly. "See here, old boat-letter, d'ye know what I did fer ye?"

"No!" the boatman replied, surlily.

"Well, I'll tell ye, if you don't scowl yer countenance outer shape, w'ich ain't no use, fer I ken't be effected wi' ugly luks. A skulemarm oncet glared at me in supreme rage till she nigh got blind, but it didn't hurt me. Tell ye about how I cum ter borry yer boat, though. Got on a rig'lar Buffler Bill war-path after a s'picious female kerackter, an' trailed her down hyar. She cut loose a boat, chucked this infunt inter et, pushed ther boat out inter ther stream, an'

then tuk leg bail fer security. Hevin' et in mind how much you'd mourn an' repine over ther loss o' yer boat, an' not knowin' but et might fit ye fer a hearse, I jest slid inter an- uther craft an' guv chase. That's how; an' I got both ther boat an' ther infunt, which I'm goin' ter adopt myself."

"Well, well! if this is really so about the boat business, I guess I'll let you off," the boat-owner said, somewhat mollified.

"Let's see the child, boy," the policeman said, approaching the Bootblack King. "I guess it had better be sent to the Foundling's Asylum."

"I guess not," Bob replied, independently. "I'm goin' ter 'dopt it myself. So ye needn't trouble yourself."

And with a saucy grimace he marched away, carrying the child in his arms.

It now began to awaken, and yelled and kicked lustily, but Bob froze to it with grim determination, his dirty face the scene of many doubtful expressions.

It was his first experience in handling infancy, and he was awkward in the extreme.

Many amused glances were sent at him as he marched independently through Chestnut street, till he came to Fifth, and then through the thoroughfare, northward, the infant screaming and struggling at every step.

Not a few of Boss Bob's bootblack and gamin acquaintances were also abroad, and geyed him, unmercifully.

At the first confectionery stand Bob equipped himself with five cents worth of horehound candy, and offered one stick to his yelling charge, and to his infinite satisfaction it immediately silenced its screams. The chubby hands bore the candied sweetness to the sweet little mouth, and there was peace.

"Candy is trump, anyhow," Bob muttered; "an' now, I must find some one who wants ter 'dopt the kid."

He probably had some person in view, for half an hour later found him mounting the steps leading into a large and noisy calico factory, in the northeastern part of the far-reaching Centennial city.

A man stood in the main entrance leaning against the door-case, engaged in smoking a cigar—a largely proportioned individual, of some five and thirty years, with a face that would have been moderately handsome but for its sinister, crafty expression, and a positive bloom to the end of a thin long nose; brown hair and mustache and goatee; and dark gray eyes that habitually wore a stern cynical glance.

He was airily attired in a full suit of gray cassimere, with spotless shirt-front and collar; a Panama straw hat upon his head, and patent-leather slippers upon his feet. In fact, his appearance was that of a wealthy business man of the period.

He eyed Boss Bob sternly as he approached, evidently not favorably impressed with his appearance.

"Mornin'," the bootblack saluted, with a nod. "'Spect this ar' Turnover's caliker establishment, ain't it?"

"Well, sir, what of it?" was the surly answer

"'Cause I wanter know," Bob replied, not in the least abashed. "Needn't be so sour about it. I twig your analysis, ter oncet. You're Mickey Mitchell, you are—'Mickey, the Supe,' fer short. Guess ye'd like ter hev a body count you ther owner, wouldn't ye? But et won't go down. I know yer, I do, an' I wanter see Miss Flora Bacon!"

CHAPTER II.

THE WAIF CHANGES HANDS.

THE superintendent of the calico mills boasted of the cognomen of Michael Angelo Mitchell, but to his utter disgust, the gamin fraternity of the city delighted in abbreviating the appellation to "Mickey," because they knew it angered him. And Boss Bob, with his mischief-loving spirit, was no exception to the rule.

"You cannot see Miss Bacon," Mitchell replied, blushing angrily. "She is busy. So begone with you, or I'll give you the toe of my boot."

"Ye will, eh?" the gamin retorted, boldly standing his ground. "Bet a clam ye dursent raise yer quait against an innercent orphan. You don't own this 'stablishment, not much, an' et's open fer ther inspection o' wisitors on Friday, w'ich to-day be a Friday. So I reckon I'll make a toor o' inspection."

"You'd better keep out, if you don't want to get into trouble," the superintendent growled, knowing that the boy had hit the truth and that he had no power to hinder him. "Whose baby's that?"

"Yourn, mebbe," the Bootblack King retorted coolly. "Found it floatin' on ther Delaware, and 'dopted it. Goin' ter turn it over ter Flora Bacon."

"Pshaw! she'll not take it. What does she want with other people's brats? Better go chuck it back in the river for fish-bait."

"No danger anybody'll ever throw ye in," Bob retorted, "fer ther fish w'u'd all git sick at their stummicks. Bet ye a dollar Miss Flore 'dopts the babe. She's sweet's old peaches on me, 'cause I pulled her beau, Fred Reed, out of the river last winter. Wanter bet?"

"No! go along with you," Mitchell growled, and accordingly Bob marched triumphantly into the mill.

Ascending the stairs, to the second floor, he entered the stamping-room, a large apartment devoted entirely to the printing of calicoes and occupied chiefly by girls and women whose ages ranged from twelve to twenty-five years.

The clanking of the ponderous machinery and busy bustle of industry made a strange tumult of noises; but Boss Bob had been in the mill before, and passed along between the presses, nodding familiarly to the girls, and grinning at their surprise to see him burdened with an infant.

He presently came to a press that was under the supervision of a young lady of some eighteen years of age, who was different from the average of the factory girls, being modest-appearing, pretty, and evidently of a higher station in life, albeit she was employed in the mill.

She was of medium height, and plainly but tastefully attired; with a fresh, charming complexion, regular, well-chiseled features, eyes of

deepest blue, and hair of a lightish-brown color, worn in a free, graceful flow over her shoulders.

She looked up as Boss Bob approached, a look of pleasure upon her face, mingled with surprise.

"Why, is that you, Bob? Where in the world did you find that baby? Oh! the dear little chub!" and the next instant she had snatched the little waif in her embrace, and covered its face with kisses, whereat it, crowed with delight.

"Oh! that's a horfant, w'ot I've 'dopted," Bob explained, perching his anatomy on a convenient stool, while a bevy of the girls gathered around curiously. "Found 'er a-floatin' on ther Delaware, an' captured her, an' 'dopted her. Goin' ter make a 'black' out o' her, soon's she gits big enuff to shine'm."

"No, you are not," Flora Bacon cried, hugging and squeezing the little stranger, warmly. "You must give her to me, Bob—really, you must. Who are her parents, Bob?"

"Dunno. Guess she ain't got any—leastways I don't know of any. 'Spect she growed, like Topsy," the Bootblack King replied. "So ye wanter 'dopt her, eh?"

"Oh! yes, yes. The old lady where I board is fond of babies, and would keep her for me while I am at work, and then I can take care of it afterward."

The young woman seemed really delighted over the idea.

"Mebbe Fred Reed will object ter et," Bob suggested, grinning, and closing one eye obliquely, at which the girls tittered and Flora colored.

"I guess not," she reassured him, laughing. "I'll run the risk, at any rate. Wait a moment, and I'll get my things, and take my little adopted home."

She soon reappeared, ready for the street, and taking the little stranger fondly in her arms, followed Boss Bob out of the factory.

Mitchell, the superintendent, still stood upon the steps, and an angry glitter stole into his eyes as he saw Flora accompanying the Bootblack King.

"Mr. Mitchell, you will excuse me, I trust, until noon?" the girl said, respectfully. "I wish to take this little waif where she will have proper care."

"I s'pose so," the superintendent replied, ungraciously. "I hope you are not going to burden yourself with that nameless youngster, Miss Bacon."

"That does not concern you, sir," Flora returned, spiritedly. "If I choose to adopt the child and care for it, I do not see what difference it can make to you."

"It makes a vast sight of difference, miss. You are one of our chief printers, and if you take the responsibility of caring for some one else's cast-off child, you will likely be called often from your duties here, and I shall have to fill your place with some person less competent."

"I believe you have that privilege," Flora said, coldly. "I shall care for the child out of charity, even if I am discharged. Come, Bob, we will go."

And they descended the steps, and walked rapidly away.

Michael Angelo Mitchell gazed after them scowlingly.

"Curse the independent spirit of that girl," he growled, stroking his pointed goatee, fiercely. "She knows I admire her, and would marry her in a minute, were she to give her consent. But she seems to detest me, for some reason, and cuts me direct at every opportunity. But wait, I am no softy, to be snubbed around by such as she, and she will find by and by that power is a more forcible and effective instrument than persuasion."

And with this conclusion he turned upon his heel, and re-entered the calico factory, his face the scene of contending emotions.

In the mean time Flora and Boss Bob walked rapidly down Fifth street, onto which they had emerged after leaving the factory behind, the Bootblack King making rather a contrast with his soiled, ragged attire, as compared with trim Flora.

"'Spect you an' Mickey Mitchell don't hitch fu'st-class, eh?" he queried, observingly. "'Pear-ed like as ef you warn't sweet on 'im, as you be on Freddy Reed."

"No, I'm not sweet on him," the factory maiden replied, with spirit. "I loathe and despise him. I fear him, constantly, but keep a brave front, for I would not dare to let him know I am afraid of him."

"Guess not. He's a bad egg, is Michael Angelic Mitchell. 'Spect I know some p'int about him, an' there's Nondescript, he's salted away a lot more. A bad egg is Mickey, but his shell will get smashed some day, an' then there'll be a bad odor ter greet ther aristocratic nostrils o' fashionable society. Bet a clam I'll be on hand, too, when Mickey's bubble bu'sts—me an' Nondescript. Any use o' my accompanyin' you funder, Miss Flore? 'Ca'se if there ain't, I reckon I'll waltz down to Chestnut street an' have a chat wi' Mayor Stokely!"

"You—you have a chat with Mayor Stokely?" Flora exclaimed, incredulously.

"Well, yes—them's what I sed. Ennything queer or curious erbout the fack?"

"Just as if Mayor Stokely would notice a ragged little gamin like you!" Flora laughed.

"But he does," Bob assured. "I reckon Bill and I knows each other. He knows I'm allus on a boom, an' then he ain't so stuck up as he luks. He knows I'm allus pokin' inter seekarts, an' nosin' out deviltry, an' now, as I've collared a big find, I'm a-goin' to ax him fer a job on ther detective perlice force."

"Ha! ha! You'd make a game policeman, Bob! But, I wish you success, nevertheless. You need not accompany me further, if you have anything else to attend to."

"All right—then I'll go and Buzz Stokely. I'll call around directly, tho'. Got enny word ter send ter Fred Reed?"

"No, I guess not—unless it's a kiss," Flora replied, laughingly.

"But how'n blazes am I goin' ter give him a kiss, ef yer don't transmit it ter my honey-trap first?"

"Oh! that is easy enough. Just tell him I send him a kiss, and that will answer. But mind—you must whisper it to him."

"Oh! you bet!" Bob nodded, wisely. "I'll

sling it at him, fu'st-class style. Good-by, Miss Flore. Look out fer my 'dopted!"

"I will—good-day," and Flora Bacon turned into a by-street, while Boss Bob continued on down Fifth street, toward Chestnut.

"Dunno ef I can make any strike wi' Stoke," he muttered. "He's ruther 'feard o' liftin' me inter any 'portant offis; 'spects I might sp'ile on his hands, mebbe. Bet he'll stare, when I open up on 'im, tho'."

Just as he was crossing Market street, the gamin bootblack saw a car passing, and he shot forward, just in time to intercept it.

"Hello, Fred Reed," he shouted, to the conductor, with a grin. "Flora Bacon sez she sends a smack to ye—sweet 'un, too!"

The young man colored, confusedly, and shook his finger menacingly after the departing youth; for the point of Bob's joke had reached the interior of the car, and caused a giggle among the passengers.

In the mean time, Boss Bob continued merrily along until he finally mounted the steps of the mayor's office on Chestnut street.

As luck would have it, Mr. William Stokely ascended the steps at the same time on his way to his office.

"Hello! guess you don't know anybody, do ye?" the King of the Bootblacks saluted, not in the least abashed at being in the presence of the chief magistrate of the Centennial city. "Reckon, mebbe, ye think I'm an average 'black,' but I ain't, nohow. I'm King an' High-Low Jack o' this purtic'lar branch o' industry, an' rejoice in the cognomen of Boss Bob, at yer service."

"Oh! it is you, is it? Well, Robert, what can I do for you?" the mayor asked, pleasantly and courteously, as was his usual wont, whether addressing a prince or a pauper; and then, too, Boss Bob was not wholly unknown to him.

"I wanter hev a privut conferdential chat on biz," the gamin replied, independently. "Reckon I've sum p'int ter pitch off, w'ich ye'd like ter mow away."

"Ah! is that so? Well, I'm glad to learn that you are still picking up 'p'int,' as you call them, for the benefit o' humanity. But as I am very busy at present, if you will call later, I'll—"

"Can't see it," Boss Bob replied, coolly. "Never would eat at ther second table; ef I can't hev first base, I don't want none. Ef ye don't wanter heer my p'int now, I'll house 'em, an' hunt up Pinkerton, who is in town."

"Well, well, my lad, if you have anything of importance on hand, come with me, and be brief. My time is largely occupied, you know—in fact, is not my own."

"'Spect so," Bob assented, following into a handsomely furnished private room.

"Be brief now, my friend. Time is scarce. Have you made any new criminal discoveries?"

"Reckon I have. 'Spect ye got a message w'ot I sent ye on ther back o' an ace o' spades, thr'u' ther post-offis, didn't ye, sayin's how I was trailin' sumthin' dead?"

"I believe I did receive some such a card," the mayor replied, taking the identical card from a pigeon-hole in his desk.

"Well, I'll unload," Bob said, scratching his

head. "Ye see there's a cert'in French milliner in town, who hes lots o' scrip about her duds, an' goes over ter Urope, ev'ry month, an' when she comes back, her winders allus blossom out wi' a hull kit o' new goods; yet she don't pay no duty. Thet's one p'int obsarved by Maloney & Co., perfeshionals. Next: Thar's a couple o' fellers w'ot hangs around ther milliner's, w'at's sly coons, an' in fac' thar's sevril leagued ter-gether, as it war, an' ther milliner she be ther centerpin. That's anuther p'int. Then, thar's an' honest old down-an'-out Quaker, Patrick McFadden, by name, w'ot makes it his bizness ter plant cadavers, an' do hearse bizness, an' sich iike. Thet makes three p'int. Now how much 'll ye give ter know ther rest o' ther 'portant secret? Collateral talks!"

"But, my dear boy, it is not in my line to purchase information!"

"Git out! Hain't I shoved my best fut for'd, fer ther last year, wi'out gittin' paid a red, by ther city, where other detectives hev grown fat an' portly out o' ther results o' their fees? G'ess so! Reckon I've 'stinguished my nibs, as well as they, but ken't see whar I've got much ter show fer it. Collateral is scarcer in my duds than purty mugs in a Centenyal lookin'-glass—an' them's solid facks, too."

"Don't reckolect enny leetle jobs I've polished off fer you 'city dads,' do ye? Hain't got no memory o' how I saved a little incendiary ixpense, down on South Sixth street; rescued 'Lysses Grant's plug hat out o' ther Delaware; bu'sted up a game ter rob ther Merkentile Bank; spotted Mully Milligan an' Cully McFadden at pawnin' jewelry; saved old Prescott frum finanshul kerlapse; captured a few p'int. erbout elexshun frauds an' sich like?—forgot all about them facks, ain't ye?"

"No—no, boy! All of your worthy deeds are known to myself and the council, and when you arrive at a proper age, you will be remembered with a good appointment. But at present you are most useful in the sphere you occupy as a bootblack, as you are able to handle matters secretly, that our most expert detectives cannot touch. Be brave, faithful and vigilant, and all in due time your services will receive proper recognition. I will bid you a pleasant good-day."

"Jest like all ther big 'uns—got yer own fashion o' dismissin' a chap," Bob muttered. "'Spect I'll go."

And he left the mayor's office for the street.

"I feel better, ennyhow," he observed, as he caught a fresh breath of air. "Them high-toned offices allus ar' as tight as a coffin, as ef they was afraid o' lettin' ther smell o' a five-cent cigar escape. 'Spect my prospects fer ther Presidency ar' boomin'."

CHAPTER III.

MADAM FAYETTE'S.

UPON one of Philadelphia's fashionable and principal shopping streets stood a large brick store, in a block with several others, the show-windows proclaiming it to be a millinery establishment, as well as the gold-lettered sign suspended above and across the sidewalk, which bore the inscription:

"MADAM FAYETTE,

Fashionable Artiste Milliner."

The sign failed to announce that, in conjunction with her millinery establishment, the madam ran a private boarding-house, up-stairs, and a female barber-shop in the rear of the millinery store, where male bipeds could get a good clean shave at the hands of several bewitching French girls for the moderate sum of fifty cents; but, although these facts were not heralded to publicity, they were generally known to madam's friends and acquaintances, who chanced to be many in numerical count, for the madam was a real beauty herself, and her bevy of assistants were not far behind.

On entering you found yourself in a gorgeous supply store of fashionable ladies' furnishing articles, and a pretty, affable young lady behind the counter, who rejoiced in the name of Cora Castle, and whose powers of persuasion and conversation were not exaggerated, if you were to call her "immense."

As a sales-maiden she lacked neither "cheek" nor assurance, and if she saw that your face needed the acquaintance of the razor, or your head the shears, she was not so bashful as to neglect to mildly remind you of the fact.

On passing through a door opening out of the millinery store, you came to a very small-sized vestibule, with a counter in ode end of it, behind which presided a darky, in spotless shirt and cuffs. There was no other furniture, nor anything to excite suspicion; but if you were familiar with the "ropes," you could have undoubtedly had dispensed to you most any style of liquid refreshment, from a mint julep to a champagne cocktail.

Leaving the "lobby," you emerged into a magnificent apartment, with frescoed walls and ceiling, superb carpets and mattings, luxurious arm-chairs, costly pictures, mammoth French-plate pier-glasses, gorgeous chandeliers and fine statuary—and this was the female barber-shop. A handsome shaving chair stood in front of each mirror—a dozen all told, and was attended in each instance by a pretty, modestly-attired young French girl.

Passing from the barber-shop, through a rear door, you ascended a pair of stairs to the second floor, where you found yourself in a long, frescoed hall, with innumerable rooms on each side, each labeled with its peculiar use.

Following the hall to the front of the building, we come to a door designated as "Private Parlor," and take a peep inside. The room proved to be a marvel of gorgeousness in adornment, the ceilings and walls being simply elaborations of the frescoer's art, and the furniture, of the richest pattern and finish, consisted of everything a fastidious taste could demand. Madam Fayette sat at a Steinway grand piano, engaged in playing a difficult, weird piece of music.

She was a petite woman, with a plump, yet graceful figure, and a fair, pleasant face, set off by a pair of magnetic black eyes, and dusky brown hair. She was one of those few persons whose looks improve with close scrutiny; and Madam Fayette, with her five-and-forty years, looked scarcely more than two-and-twenty, so lightly had the withering hand of time dealt with her.

She was pretty and affable, well-educated and polished; and had that fascinating presence which invariably wins instant respect and admiration.

She was now richly attired, and wore costly jewelry after a modest style, and made a very pretty picture as her jeweled fingers rattled over the ivory piano-keys.

At last she seemed to tire of the flow of weird music, and whirled about on her stool, to discover a man seated comfortably in a luxurious lounging-chair, near by, engaged in lighting a cigar, and the man, Michael Angelo Mitchell, attired in a dressing-gown and slippers.

He had evidently just entered, for he looked up with a nod, as he finished lighting his Havana.

"Supper was not quite ready," he observed, "and I took the liberty to intrude. You need not stop playing."

"But I will," Madam Fayette said, with a smile. "I am weary of music and everything else, nearly. I pine for excitement. What's to be done to-night?"

"I don't know. Has not Sir Filbert been around to-day?"

"No. Neither has Latch nor McFadden. The Albatross is scudding low, ready to be loaded."

"Have you received a permit from the Board of Health to bring the coffin into the city?"

"Yes. That's all that is required. I have made arrangements with the keeper of Woodland Cemetery to have the body taken from the boat which will run up the Schuylkill to the rear side of the cemetery, and conveyed by the rear way to my vault. It is doubtless safely locked up in the vault now."

And the madam chuckled strangely as she finished.

"It's a clever plan. How many 'bodies' are there now in the tomb?" Mitchell asked.

"Sixteen—total value about forty thousand dollars."

"Humph! it's worked all right so far, but we'll have to drop it, directly, or suspicion will be aroused. That you should bring sixteen of your dead relatives across the Atlantic just because of your whim to have them deposited in your private vault here, does look a little queer, to say the least." And the superintendent of the calico mills laughed rather uneasily. "I am afraid we'll get ourselves in trouble yet."

"I hope not," Madam Fayette said thoughtfully. "As you say, we must drop that game and go back to my old one. Have you perfect confidence in Sir Filbert Frothingham?"

"Oh! yes. I trust him implicitly. Has he not been with us long enough to prove his loyalty?"

"Perhaps. I simply asked to draw forth your opinion. I always dread traitors next to poison."

"True. But I guess our flock are all reliable. There's one rascal in the city, however, whom I am afraid of. He is called Boss Bob, and is a bootblack. He has a half-witted companion whom they call the Nondescript, and the two are nosing into everybody's business that comes under their observation. The boy, Boss Bob, is as keen as a razor, and I believe he has the

power of reading a person and their secrets at a glance. He appears to be familiar with my name, and I only fear that he may have spotted me, and is secretly keeping watch of my movements."

"I hope not," Madam Fayette responded. "For an outsider to get an insight into our secrets would prove disastrous in the extreme."

Throngs of people were wending Centennialward—some afoot, many on the loaded-down street cars, and not a few in cabs or elegant barouches. A vast concourse of many nations—it was but a common daily scene, as the term of the Centennial began to narrow down.

"Hurry, Nondescript; don't be laggin' ahind, a-castin' Chinerman's eyes at every purty gal yer see," cried Boss Bob, as he and his strange companion wended their way along through the crowd. "Gals are all very good in their sphere, but bizness an' gals don't run on ther same hoss-car line. Labor is capertal, an' capertal is wittles, an' ther average chap without wittles ain't no chap at all. Ef we want capertal, labor's got ter cum fu'st. So

"Black yer boots, make 'em shine,
Only costs ye half er dime;
Make yer quaits, sir, all at rest
Will a daub o' Bixby's Best;
Cure yer corns and parding yer sins,
Add a luster to yer shins;
Open yer eyes—lighten yer purse,
So jest a half er dime disburse."

"Shine 'em, mister. Jest let me tackle them gunboats o' yourn. Make 'em luk like a pair o' big reflectors quicker'n a sassenger can bark. An' all it'll cost ye, is half a dime—twentieth part of a dollar."

But too intent were the visitors, on reaching the scene of the monster Exposition, to pause; consequently neither Boss Bob nor the Nondescript picked up any jobs until they arrived in the immediate vicinity of the Centennial inclosure, when they had all the work they could attend to.

A thin, short, wiry little man, with a jet-black mustache, and eyes of the same color, but small and bead-like, and hair long and straight as an Indian's, stood near the entrance to the Board of Finance building, smoking a fragrant cigar, and watching those who entered the grounds; and then, he also kept an eye on Boss Bob, who was doing a lively polishing trade, his tongue playing with equal rapidity with his brush. No matter who was his customer, he always managed to drum up a conversation, and find out who the party was.

His present patron was a tall, stylishly-attired fellow, with a dainty mustache and effeminate appearance, but not unhandsome.

He wore a suit of gray woolen goods, with a shining silk hat upon his head, and also boasted of quite a display of jewelry.

Try though he did, Bob was unsuccessful in getting up much talk with this party. He persisted in maintaining silence, and kept his gaze roving around him, in a nervous manner.

"Needn't talk ef ye don't wanter talk," Boss Bob rattled on. "'Spect ye feel 'way up,' an' calculate we o' ther radiatin' perfeshion ain't

prime, but we doan't keer. We 'blacks' consider oursel's as fur above ye ordinary soft-shelled eyster-eaters as a wharf-rat do above a common mice. Sum fellers rise up in ther world jest like concentrated yeast; an' then ther's anuther class w'ot booms along up at er moderit pace, an' finally gits ter be President, er Chief Dog-Ketcher. Bet a clam you're one o' ther former class—sprung up like a musheroon, leavin' tailers' bills, an' hash billy-dues unpaid."

The fop had received the boy's harangue with a darkening face, and now jerked his half-polished boot from the box, angrily.

"You insolent young rascal!" he cried, raising his heavy walking-cane, threateningly, "do you know whom you are addressing, sir?"

"No, an' don't care, neither," was the independent reply. "This is a free American Hail Columbjy Eagle country, an' chin's as free as sweitzer case. 'Spect you call yerself Sir Filbert Franklyn Frothingham, but I'll bet a clam thet's only game—cl'ar froth, ye see, like cums on top o' lager beer. Goin' ter let me finish frescoin' yer gunboat?"

"No, you saucy young whelp. I'll not pay you a cent or let you touch my boots again. You are entirely too forward for a boy of your age."

"Dunno 'bout that," Bob observed, coolly, as he seated himself complacently upon his upturned box, while another urchin ran up to finish the job. "Guess I'll keep wi'out sp'ilin', ennyhow. As fer ther job, ther loss o' a nickel ain't goin' ter bankrupture me, hossy. Got lots o' tin in my breeches pocket, w'at I've made this mornin'. Dursen't bet w'ich hes got ther biggest pile. Know'd you hedn't ernuff ter buy a penny-grab. Ruther lose hold on five cents, enny time, then ter lose ther satisfaction o' takin' a feller's foter-graff. I say, Frothy, how's ther trade in cadavers? Know of four dead cats down my way, w'ot kin be bought cheap—one Thomas cat, an' two feminines an' a spitz terrier!"

Sir Filbert Frothingham uttered a fierce curse and glared at Boss Bob sharply; then abruptly turned and strode away through the dense crowd, followed by a mocking laugh from the Bootblack King, and a wry look from the urchin who had essayed to finish the polishing job where Boss Bob had left off.

"Ha! ha! sling a hint at er clam, an' he'll allus close his shell," the king laughed, his face distorted with a grin of delight. "Bet a shuck eyster thet sport feels narvous, like. Say, cully, didn't get yer pay, did yer?"

"No," the boy replied, dolefully.

"Know'd ye wouldn't. Lots o' ther perfeshion got fooled on jest sech chaps as him. 'Spect he'll wanten put a lammerkin over my eye, next time we meet."

And with a chuckle the gamin picked up his box and moved off.

As he came opposite the little individual with the black hair and bead-like eyes he paused and stared at him, thoughtfully, and the little individual returned the scrutiny with interest.

"'Spect mebbe you see some green in my eye, eh?" the gamin finally demanded, tauntingly.

"No, I see steel there," the little man replied, "and that fact causes me to wish to know you."

"Well, I'm open fer dates—allus ready ter scrape acquaintance, ef et's elergible. My cognomen is Boss Bob, fer short—Bobby Burns Beecher Maloney, fer long. What's your es-crutchun?"

The little man smiled.

"I have heard of you," he said. "I am Tony Fox, the Ferret. In the profession I am known as Captain Ferret!" And the detective advanced and extended his hand.

CHAPTER IV.

TONY FOX, OF NEW YORK.

"Know'd you was a hull hoss," Boss Bob declared, shaking hands with the little man. "Know'd you weren't no Jarsey man, ner a feller o' Bosting culchaw. 'Spect by ther cut o' yer jibboom thet ye hail from the port o' New York?"

"And hit it, exactly," Ferret responded, with a nod. "You are quick of perception, I perceive, which is good. I am in need of just such a young man as you—want a sort of partner, you see. Got a few points about you from the chief of police here, and came up here to see if I could pick you out."

"Reckon thet weren't no hard job," Bob replied. "I'm kinder of a landmark, heerabouts, an' some o' ther boyss say I war ther fu'st chap w'ot suggested ther plan o' gittin up this Centennyal. Dunno 'bout thet myself, tho'. 'Spect you're trackin' some game, eh?"

"Well, yes, and again no. I learned that there were some New York rogues operating down here, and thought I'd come over and look 'em up on account of old scores."

"Bully. You'll find 'em thicker'n lice on er yellor dorg. Shine 'em fer ye?"

And, ever with an eye to business, Bob directed an inquisitive glance at the boots of the New York detective.

"I don't know but you may," he said, putting forward a small foot. "I generally do my own polishing, but since we're to double up, I'll let out the job to you."

"Hedn't ye allus better ketch yer chickens afore ye peel 'em?" Bob quizzed, with a grin. "When I uster snare cats on top o' ther roofs fer Schneider, ther sassage-maker, I never made a habit o' puttin' enny dependence on Thomas till I got him."

"Oh!" Ferret laughed. "Well, I'm pretty sure of you, because I know you're always ready to venture into business that has the promise of adventure and reward."

"You can bet a hull cup o' soft-shell clams on that, lovey-dovey. Ef there's any prospect o' regular Buffler Bill blood an' thunder excitement, wi' solid 'Mighty dollers,' an' collateral security ter back it, count me in, every time. Goin' ter give me the twig?"

"Yes, but not here. Come along into the Centennial, and we'll see the sights, and talk, as we see 'em."

"What—me go inter ther great show, in my perfeshional attire!" Boss Bob ejaculated, in surprise. "No, sir-ee! S'pose I'd sail in thar in these rough togs? Guess not."

"When I tread the corridors uv fame an' his-trionic eulogification, I want ter be rigged up

nothin' short o' a President, or fu'st-class huckster."

"Then come along into the park. We'll have a talk, and see the Centennial later," Fox said.

Accordingly he and Boss Bob moved along toward the southern terminus of the grounds.

"'Spect ye see'd thet feller w'at got mad when I was shinin' his propellers?" Bob asked, accepting a fragrant cigar from the Ferret's case.

"Yes, I noticed the chap—know him, in fact. He is New York Johnny, the burglar, forger, kidnapper, and villain at large. He's boarded on the State more times than he's got teeth."

"Know'd he was a thurrerbred," the Bootblack King declared. "Allus kin tell a boss by ther kink in his karackter. So he's N. Y. Johnny, is he? Humph! 'Spect thar's quite a difference between thet h ndle an' Sir Filbert Franklyn Frothin'ham. Guess so!"

"Does he go under the latter name here in Philadelphia?"

"Bet he does! Puts on thet he's an earl or a dook, er sum sech-like; an' Lordy! ye ken't tech him wi' a ten-foot pole, he's so scrumpshus. I closed him up like a reg'lar clam, tho', a few while ago. 'Spect he's cogitatin' about me, now, darker'n a teetotal eclipse."

The New York detective did not reply, and the two walked down Elm avenue until its intersection with Girard, when they struck off past the Siege of Paris building, toward the children's play-ground, in Fairmount Park.

Arrived here, they took seats opposite each other, on the rustic settees.

"Now we will compare notes," Fox said, looking around and noting that there were no loungers in their immediate vicinity. "There are a few questions I would like you to answer, in as straightforward manner as you can."

"All right. Spill 'em out, an' I'll analyze an' doctor 'em," Bob replied, with a grin. "I'm famous at answerin' questions, when thar's solid cash collatateral ahead."

"Yes. Money is quite an incentive. First I want to know whereabouts this New York Johnny stops?"

"Dunno. 'Spect he stops at Madam Fayette's most o' ther time. Seen him come out o' thar, severil times."

"Where is Madam Fayette's?"

"Down in Eighth street."

"What kind of a place is it?"

"Queer. Milliner shop in front, female barber-shop back, an' boardin'-house up-stairs. Heerd say it's nobby. Dunno what more."

"Humph! All under the management of this Madam Fayette, eh?"

"'Spect so. Never was in it."

"You must somehow contrive to get in it, and make a thorough reconnoissance. This New York Johnny is suspected of having stolen a casket of diamonds and other jewels, recently, from an English lady in New York, and as no place can be found where they have been dropped, he may have them concealed wherever he stays. Do you think you could somehow menage to go through the madam's establishment?"

"Dunno. 'Spect they don't entertain boot-blacks there; but if there's enny virtue in

cheek, I'll make a go of it. Know a gal who slings out fineries from behind ther counter there, an' mebbe I can git up a boom wi' her."

"Try it. I'll give you a hundred dollars if you find the casket."

"How big is it?—big's a beer cask?"

"Hardly," Fox replied, smiling. "It is a small, square box, not much larger than an ordinary collar box, is made of ebony, and banded with gold. Who is the girl you spoke of?"

"Oh! she's Cora Castle, now, French milliner. Six months ago she used ter be Sally Toodles pavement-scrubber an' supe fer an up-town mansion, but she had plenty o' tongue an' lots o' cheek, an' riz up."

"Ah! perhaps you can get a look through Madam Fayette's establishment, by working things right, then. Here are twenty-five dollars. Use it for clothing and whatever you may judge best, and after trying your game, let me know the results."

And the detective handed several notes to the Bootblack King, which he pocketed with satisfaction.

"Got a few p'int's to give you since we're pards," Bob said, scratching his head. "Ever heer of Judge Turnover?"

"What—the mill-owner?"

"Yes—that's him."

"I've heard much of him. Is rich and miserly?"

"Bet yer eysters on that! Tighter'n ther hug uv a live lobster."

"I believe that he used to be different," Fox said. "I've heard that his wife ran away to Europe, years ago, taking her children with her, which soured the judge into a grim, miserly, unrelenting man."

"Mebbe so. Well, this Turnover, he's got a feller superintendin' his mill, called Mickey Mitchell. This Mitchell an' a gang of other chaps are known to the medical profession as the Lifters' League. They go an' dig up bodies out o' cemeteries, an' sell 'em to the doctors who want cadavers ter dissect, through an agent they call Patrick McFadden, undertaker an' funeral furnisher. This McFadden keeps the 'Morgue,' an' furnishes the bodies ter physicians, when they want 'em."

"Well, well, this is an old New York dodge, I see," the detective said, scratching his head. "Who are these other parties connected with this man Mitchell?"

"One chap is McFadden, an' another is called Franklyn. He's Frothingham. Then there's another called Beauvard, an' Mitchell."

"I know the man McFadden, and also Frothingham, *alias* New York Johnny," the Ferret said. "Mitchell and Beauvard, however, are not down on my private Rogues' Register."

"'Spect Madam Fayette an' Beauvard mebbe is the same," Boss Bob said, with a grin. "I ken ginerally smell er rat, 'specially if it be a furrin rat."

"Then you believe this French milliner to be in league, and connected with this band of rascals?"

"Bet I do! Know sev'rll other p'int's, too, but they'll keep. Tell me w'at I'll do now, Foxy. I'll p'int ye as head chief o' ther firm o'

Maloney, Nondescript and Fox, detectives. You'll stand ready to receive the p'int and cases, as fast as I an' Nondescript gathers 'em, an' sell 'em fer solid cash collateral. By that way, we can git up a reg'lar Centenyal boom in bizness, all on our own hook. What d'ye say—we scare up the jobs, an' you take 'em at par?"

"Very well. Go to work, and whatever success you may make, I will pay you for."

Boss Bob soon took leave of the detective, and jumping aboard a car, he rode back into the old city, leaving the car at Eighth and Market streets.

Seeing nothing of the Nondescript here (who had preceded him in leaving the Centennial grounds), Bob continued on down Market street to Sixth, where he stood for some time inspecting the outside display of clothing of Wanamaker's great establishment.

"Dunno whether I want black broadcloth, or sky-blue," he muttered, shoving his hand into his breeches pocket to see that his \$25 was still there. "'Spect ef I was to wear broadcloth, folks'd take me fer Beecher, an' ef I'd top off wi' blue, they'd call me 'Lysses Grant, or Phil Sheridan. Guess I'll sail in an' buy out the hull establishment, an' choose afterward."

"Hello, sonny. Want to puy von nice suit off clodings?" saluted one of the outside clerks. "Sell 'em sheep."

"Oh! you go soak ther Dutch from yer tongue," the King of the Bootblacks replied. "Don't 'spect I'm goin' to buy any o' ther duds that these dummies hes bin wearin, do ye? Guess not! I'm comin' ter buy ther' establishment out after I dine. I'm Jay Gould, yeshould know. Tra-la-loo!"

And away the gamin strutted, his melodious voice ringing out in his own peculiar business signal:

"Black yer boots—make 'm shine,
Only costs ye half a dime."

Working his way back to Eighth street, between jobs, he took that thoroughfare and continued on in a northerly course, pausing occasionally to inspect the tempting display of shop windows.

He finally came to a large window of a pretentious brick block, devoted to the display of fine and costly laces and rare furnishing goods of the feminine persuasion.

"Reckon this is Madam Fayette's place," the youth muttered, surveying the fineries with a nod. "Allus kin tell a French milliner from er Yank, 'cause she hez a plaster o' Paris bust o' Rochambeau in ther windy. 'Spect Cora Castle's in thar. Wonder how she'll take ter old friends, anyhow? 'Spect she'll deny she ever know'd me, like enough. That's ther jigger wi' ther gals. Feed 'em on candy, and buy 'em You de Cologne, an' you're all hunky, till yer bank akkount is bu'sted—then luk out fer broom-handles, slop-buckets an' scrub-brushes! 'Spect I better go in an' buzz Maddammorsel Cora, an' see ef she'll do ther high kink by me."

With his blacking-kit slung behind his back, he mounted the step, independently, and entered the millinery-shop.

There were no customers present, but the

pretty, saucy-looking Miss Castle stood behind the counter, her nimble, bejeweled fingers engaged in sorting over a batch of laces.

She looked up with a faint frown of annoyance at Bob's entrance, but the look turned to one of surprise as the Bootblack King approached the counter and doffed his hat.

"Good-mornin'," he said, assisting himself to a seat with the utmost indifference. "See'd you in heer, an' thort I'd drop in, on account o' old scores. Know me, don't ye?"

"No, I do not," the girl replied, proceeding with her work, and not deigning him a second glance. "My acquaintance, in Philadelphia, does not extend among the bootblacks."

"Oh! et don't eh? 'Spect ye're a furriner right over from France, ain't ye?" Bob said sarcastically. "A feller could tell you was a hoss-eater by ther cut o' yer jib. Spill us out a little genuine Rochambeau, now—fer instance, *amour beaucoup mais argent fait tout*. Ha! ha! bet a one-legged salt-water clam ye ken't tell what et means."

The girl looked puzzled.

"No, I can not," she said. "It is not good French."

"Yes it is—reg'lar old prime article, jest sech as all you hoss cannerbals use, every day. Tell ye w'at I'll do—I'll bet you ain't no madammorsell, no more'n I be, or Nondescript. Used ter know a gal by ther name o' Sally Toodles, w'ot loked jest like you, 'cept she didn't wear sech togs, ner French jewelry. Sally she scrubbed pavements fer a livin', an' I 'spect we'd eventooally hev cum tergether, but she slid off, an' I lost track o' her. An' you're Sally Toodles that waz—or I'm a cross-eyed eyster!"

It was more of a conclusion than an inference, and Miss Castle flushed and colored.

"How dare you associate me with any of the vile creatures of the streets?" she cried, with assumed indignation. "I would be greatly relieved if you would leave the store, you bootblack."

"But I won't swaller hints wuth a cent," Boss Bob assured, coolly. "I never 'cept invertashions o' that kind, unless ther feller's bigger'n I am. No use o' gittin up on ther pinnercal o' yer dignitary, Sally, fer ye can't squeeze around ther fact thet ye aire a Toodles, nohow. Castles aire a very fine thing ter shoulder, but Toodles wull hang by er person ther longest, 'specially when ther male Toodles boards at Moya, an' ther female Toodles keeps a gin mill. Ha! ha!"

The taunt caused the girl to color again, and her eyes snapped angrily.

"You are insolent," she said. "It does not matter who I am, to you."

"'Spect not, but then I allus like ter take fotergraffs," Bob assured, with a smile. "'Stonishin' how sum folks will climb ther ladder o' fortin'. Never 'spected ter see you riz so high. 'Member ther time I put a lamberkin over a feller's eye, cause he mistook his occerpation by tryin' ter kiss you?—an' how I, after drivin' off ther enemy, tried like a reglar Buffler Billiam ter kiss ye, myself, an' got a scrub bucket crammed down over my head? 'Spect ye git big money, heer, Sally?"

"Why will you persist in tormenting me?" the

girl cried. "If you do not let me alone, I shall have to call the madam."

"Call her. Tell her thar's a good-lukin' feller down heer who's jest fell heir ter a big fortune, in Calerforny. Mebbe I an' her kin strike er matrimonial trade."

"You got a fortune?" the girl asked, incredulously.

"On course I have," Bob replied, importantly, adding under his breath, "to get!"

"Then that makes a difference," Miss Castle decided. "I do recognize you as Boss Bob, and will acknowledge that I was once Sally Toodles—but no longer so, however. What can I do for you, Bob?"

CHAPTER V.

BOSS BOB'S BOLD VENTURE.

THE manner of the shop girl was entirely changed, now, and she put on her most winning smiles, which tickled Bob amazingly.

"Know'd ye was Sally," he nodded, with a forward hitch of his chair. "Can't fool a professional on sech matters. But my fortune I have yet to get."

The girl laughed good-naturedly. She saw she had been beaten, and was not inclined to be angry.

"Well, I'll forgive you for fibbing to me," she said. "But really, you must not give me away. It would spoil all."

"Oh! I'll keep my conversation-valve close, so long's you do the square thing. I'd jest leave hev a Castle as a Toodles, an' so now, ef ye do what I want o' you, you're solid."

"What do you want?" the girl asked suspiciously.

"Tell ye jest what," the King of Bootblacks said, leaning forward. "I want to see the inside o' every room in ther 'stablishment."

"Oh! that is impossible. There is no one at home except myself and the barber girls—the madam and the boarders are all off at the Centennial."

"That suits me ter a capiterl dot," Bob announced. "I kin go through ther up-stairs part wi'out molestation."

"But I could not allow that. You have no right to enter people's rooms."

"Bet a clam I hev," was the reply. "Jest peep at that, will ye?" and turning up the lapel of his coat, he exposed a small brass star. It was one he had found, once, but the shop girl mistook it for a detective's badge, and whitened a trifle at sight of it.

"You are a detective!" she gasped.

"'Spect mebbe I am," Bob replied, with assumed seriousness; "leasthow, I want to review the interior of this 'stablishment, 'thout ther knowledge uv yer bossee, an' wi'out hevin' ter make anybody trouble. So ef ye've got enny objections ter takin' a trip ter ther Central Perlice Court, you'd better give me the keys, and let me reconnoiter."

"Oh! I dare not! I dare not!" Cora said in alarm. "If madam should find it out, or find you there, I would get my discharge."

"I'll bet a clam ye won't; ef ye sneak me up, no one 'll be the wiser; ef I get ketched, I'll throw suspishion from your shoulders."

"You promise this?"

"Yes—if you promise ter be loyal ter me an' my kuntry," Bob replied. "'Sides that, when I git out I'll present ye wit' peanuts and candy till y' can't rest."

The girl looked doubtful, but reached for a bunch of keys that hung upon a nail driven in one of the shelves behind the counter.

"You remain here," she said, "until I come back, and I will see if I can clear the way for you."

She entered the next room and closed the door behind her, while Bob inspected the costly articles displayed in the great show-cases with a critical eye.

"Wonder ef a feller has ter buy all sich things fer his wife when he constertoots one o' ther big-bugs?" he muttered. "'Spect he'd hev ter own a big bank account."

Cora Castle was not gone long ere she made her reappearance.

"Here are the keys to the upper rooms," she said, handing them to Boss Bob. "All the second-story rooms are unlocked. You can make the venture if you choose. You'd better not s'ay long, however, lest Madam Fayette should return and discover you. Pass in through the first room into the barber-shop, and you'll find the stairway."

"How 'bout ther gals? Won't they pitch onter a feller an' eat 'im up all because he's good-looking?"

"No. I've explained to them that you've come to see the madam about hiring out, and will await her return in the kitchen. If you don't say anything to them they'll not be likely to trouble you or say anything to you. You may go now."

With a grin of delight Bob took the keys and left the store for the next interior apartment, bent on his venturesome mission.

Tipping a wink to the darky waiter behind the bar, he passed into the barber-shop, and in a few minutes was in the hall on the upper floor. Here he paused to reconnoiter.

"'Spect I better commence in this story and work upward, so that if I get booted out, I'll be so much nearer the moon. Lucky hit I made in coming here, an' workin' on ther feelin's o' Sally Toodles. Gals allus is soft."

The first room he entered on the right of the hall proved to be a combined kitchen and pantry, and he spent a few minutes here in regaling his inner man on choice viands he found at his disposal.

The next connecting room was a long, magnificent dining-hall, set with tables and chairs.

Seeing nothing of what he was in quest here, he entered the next apartment which was nothing less than a gambling-room, furnished with billiard-table, faro-table, keno lay-out and roulette; also a walnut side-board which he rightly concluded was devoted to the storage of wines and liquors, and gaming-tools.

"Well, may I be forced ter live on dorg sassage, ef this ain't a reg'lar hossy old place, anyhow," Bob muttered. "Ef et wassent fer pressin' surcumstances, I reckon I'd like ter stop at this hotel."

The next door admitted him to the madam's private parlor, and he spent some time in inspecting it, for there were many fine orna-

ments and fixtures that took his eye. He failed to find the casket, however, and was about ready to leave the room, when he made two discoveries.

The first was that it was near night—for on looking out of the front window, he perceived that a store across the way was being lit up.

He had absorbed more time in his explorations than he had any idea of. Following close upon the heels of this discovery came one of a more startling character—some one was approaching the parlor, along the hall—not one person, evidently, for there were footsteps of several.

It at once became plain to Bob that he was cornered, for the hall door was the only outlet from the room, and to attempt to escape through that meant instant discovery.

There was but one hope for him—a high walnut bookcase stood crosswise of one corner of the room, and behind it was sufficient place for a person to hide.

It was much too heavy for one person to lift, but catching hold of the top, Bob drew himself up, by the main strength of his arms, and dropped down upon the other side, without creating any noise worth mention.

He had scarcely esconced himself in a comfortable position, when the door opened, and three persons entered the room.

Two of them were men, he concluded, by their heavier footfalls, and the smell of cigar smoke. The other Bob rightly concluded was Madam Fayette.

"Shute me fer a cross-eyed clam ef that cigar-smoke don't smell better'n Jockey Club! Wonder ef I ain't got a stub about my duds, so I can keep 'em company. Ah! here's half o' a reg'lar genewine Havanner, w'ot cost me three cents, up at ther Centenyal. Dunno w'ether ther two breeds o' smoke'll mix or not—don't care, neither. All I want's ter heer them folks converse, an' spill out their secrets inter my ocular hopper. Bet I kin store away more p'int's in less time than any coon in Philadelphia."

And, regardless of the consequences that might follow, the Bootblack King lit his half-smoked cigar and puffed away comfortably, his eyes closed as he leaned against the wall, but his ears were wide open to catch any points that might be opened by the three occupants of the parlor.

It was some time before anything was said, and then Madam Fayette spoke.

"We are ready to hear your report now, Sir Franklyn. You said you had something of importance to communicate to us."

"So I have," was the reply. "If we do not lay low, there is a prospect of trouble. You have heard of the young bootblack devil they call Boss Bob, maybe?"

"Yes, I have!" a third voice replied, hoarsely, which Boss Bob at once set down as belonging to no person other than Michael Angelo Mitchell, the mill superintendent. "He is a little too cute for a lad of his age."

"And as sharp as a steel needle," Sir Franklyn averred. "Well, he attempted to blacken my boots to-day, but through his insolence I left the job for another urchin to complete, first giving him a good kick."

"Oh, w'ot a whopper!" Bob muttered under his breath, from his place of concealment. "'Stonishin' w'ot heroes sum fellers will make out o' themselves w'en they don't think no one's around w'ot knows better."

"Yes, I gave him a good kick," Sir Franklyn pursued. "Why, the young devil hinted as much as though I was concerned in grave robbery!"

"Ha, ha! do you fancy he knows how near he came to the truth?" Mitchell asked.

"Certainly. He evidently has been spotting us and knows all—or else, how would he know anything?"

"True. And if he knows all, we are in imminent danger of being arrested, for that young devil has no respect for persons—especially evil-doers," Mitchell averred. "We must somehow contrive to purchase his silence, or procure it, for my position under old Turnover is too valuable to be lost."

"And likewise, my millinery trade," Madam Fayette added. "But I have a plan in my mind by which, I think, we can trap the young rascal. What else have you to communicate, Sir Franklyn?"

"Something of importance. This boy, Boss Bob, is, I believe, in league with Fox the Ferret, from New York. I saw them talking together to-day. Fox is in town for the purpose of nabbing me for 'lifting' a valuable set of jewelry from an English lady, lately in N. Y. But the joke of it is, he has no proof against me to arrest me on. But, that is not what I was about to say. You remember that I married a poor girl, not over two years ago, by the name of Adele Lawton?"

"Yes," Madam Fayette replied. "I also knew the girl."

"Well, the fell hand of the Destroyer has struck her down, and left me at freedom to wed Madam Fayette at any time she may please."

The madam laughed a little.

"Perhaps I should cry, at that news, since Adele was of my own flesh and blood," she said; "but in truth, I am not of a disposition to mourn. Adele was too much like her father, as were the other children, for me to care for her. I shirked my responsibility of caring for them, years ago, and there ended my concern for their welfare."

"Then, is it really true that Adele was your own daughter?" Sir Franklyn asked.

"Yes. I should have told you before, only I did not want her to get upon my track. You had a child by her, I believe?"

"Yes. I had one," was the significant reply, "but the French nurse, Felice, who attended Adele, stole it, and when I gave chase and overtook her, I found her in the neighborhood of the river, without the child. Questioning her proved useless, and I could only draw my conclusions that she had drowned the child in the river."

"A very safe conclusion to draw, I presume," the madam said, sarcasm in her tone, while Boss Bob, behind the bookcase, shut his teeth together with a snap.

"Ef this ain't ther toughest nest o' ripe rogues and roguesses, I'll be sold dorg cheap," he muttered, under his breath. "They talk about

death as ef et wasn't no worse ter kill er person than ter eat er mince pie."

"I had as lief draw that conclusion, as not," Sir Franklyn said.

"I'll bet your child is not drowned, or anything of the kind," Mitchell said. "Boss Bob found a babe in the Delaware, a few mornings ago, and placed it in charge of one of my factory girls, whom I have mentioned here, before, as Flora Bacon."

"Curses on the luck!" Frothingham growled. "There's another case of that devilish boot-black's meddling. He must be silenced; or, better, put out of the way."

"I'll see, myself, that he is attended to," Madam Fayette said, fiercely. "But let the babe alone, Sir Franklyn, for it is in good hands, and will never be likely to bother you. Flora Bacon is also my daughter!"

The two men uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"This is incredible," Mitchell exclaimed.

"I had three children, and two of them were girls. I placed them in the Almshouse, and they were afterward adopted by the two families whose names they bear—Lawton and Bacon."

"What became of the boy?"

"I gave him to the captain of a whaling vessel, and he is doubtless a sailor before the mast."

"Then, perhaps you can induce Flora Bacon to become my wife?" Mitchell said.

"Perhaps not," was the decided reply. "I have nothing to do with her."

"Then, you at least ought to tell me who her father was?"

"If it will benefit you any to know, he is the miserly old nabob, to whom you look for your spare cash—Judge Turnover."

Boss Bob, behind his bookcase concealment bit his fingers to keep from whistling his surprise.

"May I never shine ernuther boot, ef this ain't a reg'lar Alexander Dumas of er drammer," he muttered, his eyes glistening with excitement. "Wonder what Miss Flora will say when I unload my diskiveries fer her ter cogitate on. Thet madam is ther wife o' Turnover, w'ot Foxy sed went ter Urope, an' left her husband. Phew! w'ot a sensation it would make, ef I'd give ther pints ter ther *Bulletin* or *Times*! I'd be a bigger man thun 'Lysses Grant in less'n ther wink uv a clam's eye. Guess I won't spill my cargo, jest yet, however. Mebbe I'll rake in sum more p'int bymeby."

There was a lull in the conversation now, and the gas was lit for the evening. The clink of glasses also suggested that the occupants of the parlor were regaling themselves with drinks.

"Have you heard anything more from the boat?" Madam Fayette asked, after a long pause.

"Yes. I saw the captain, this morning," Sir Franklyn replied. "He said he had kept the boat scudding about the bay, and will touch the Schuylkill shore, at the swampy flats in the rear of Woodland Cemetery to-night, after midnight. McFadden and Mulroony will be there to receive the coffin, and to see to getting it into the vault."

"Good! I will visit the vault to-morrow and see to getting the cargo away. It is not safe there any longer, if the young Arab, Boss Bob, is in the secret."

"No, indeed! The smuggling game is about played out. You will have to beat the Customhouse the old way now," Mitchell declared. "By the way, there was a death in Green street, this morning; a rich old lady, named Thorpe, dropped away, after a lingering sickness that has baffled medical skill to analyze. There will undoubtedly be a demand for her body."

"Good. Do you know where she will be buried?" the madam asked, eagerly.

"Yes. She has a lot in Fernwood Cemetery, out near Fernwood Station. She will be a fine catch, too, for being a loud dresser and rich and miserly, it is not improbable that she will be rigged out gay, in jewelry, even if she does not take her cash along with her."

"Very well. We will see to it to-morrow night," the madam announced. "Phew, Mitchell, that is a bad cigar you are smoking. It is disgustingly strong and rank!"

"Indeed! you are certainly mistaken," the superintendent replied, evidently somewhat ruffled in spirit. "It is an excellent cigar I am smoking, for I never will tolerate a cheap one. These cigars cost me three dollars per dozen at Partuendo's stand in the Colonnade Hotel."

"Then, you must be the guilty party, Sir Franklyn," Madam Fayette said, "for I certainly detect the smell of a poor cigar in the room. I am a connoisseur in the matter of cigars, I flatter myself, and I never fail to detect the presence of a poor article."

"You are at fault again, nevertheless," Frothingham replied, "for I also purchase my cigars at Partuendo's, and have one of the same brand Mitchell is smoking."

"Can it be possible? Then there is some person in the room, smoking, besides you. Quick! lock the door, and do not let him escape. He may be a burglar."

"But w-where is he," Sir Franklyn faltered, obeying her orders. "I see no sign of any person, aside from ourselves. I—I have no weapons."

"Bah! do not be a fool. There is no occasion to use weapons," Madam Fayette said, coolly. "If there is any one concealed in the room, it must be behind the bookcase, yonder. Mitchell, will you help me move it to one side?"

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTURED AND CHLOROFORMED.

BOSS BOB had overheard the discussion about the cigars with feelings of chagrin, for he realized that he had betrayed himself by his own carelessness.

"Spect I'll be discovered, and booted out, now!" he soliloquized under his breath. "Yes, here they come to move the case. Wonder how this blud-an-thunder drammer is goin' to end?"

There was nothing for him to do but face the music, and he accordingly remained seated on the floor, and puffed away at his poor cigar with the utmost apparent unconcern.

"Yes, the smoker of the poor cigar is behind

here," the madam said, "for I can smell the smoke, stronger, now."

The next minute their united efforts succeeded in pulling the bookcase to one side, and Boss Bob was revealed.

A curse escaped the villainous trio, as they discovered him.

"It's the cussed bootblack," Mitchell cried, with a start.

"Bet yer boots it is, Mickey!" Bob returned, unconcernedly. "You've goter memory hitcht ter ye like er hawk, I see. Didn't spect ther honer uv this visit, did ye?"

The three plotters interchanged glances, in which there was a mingling of dark expressions.

"See here, you boy, I'm going to have you arrested!" Mitchell cried sternly.

"What fur? What've I bin doin'?" Boss Bob queried, the picture of innocence.

"I'll show you what you've been doing, you young Arab. I'll learn you to sneak into people's houses and play eavesdropper, I will."

"Don't need no learnin' on thet score, Mickey," was the calm retort. "I've gradywated, an' got thet all down fine."

Mitchell uttered an oath, and turned to Madam Fayette, who was white with rage.

"What shall we do with him, madam?"

"There seems but one thing to do," was the significant reply. "He has overheard so much that it will not do to let him escape, you know."

"Of course not. Yet we hardly dare use violence!"

"Better kill me, and sell my cadaver ter old McFadden!" Bob chuckled with a grin. "'Spect ef ther physickans wer' ter cut me up, there'd be a heap more o' perfeshional science than there is now."

"You keep still, or you'll die sooner than you want to," Sir Frothingham threatened, peering over the shoulders of his companions in crime.

"Hello! shute me fer a cross-eyed clam ef thar ain't New York Johnny! I say, Frothy, thet was a big bootin' ye give me up at ther Exposish! Wanter try et over again?"

And then the irrepressible Bootblack King burst into a fit of merry laughter that convulsed his whole person, and caused Sir Franklyn to get red in the face.

"Get up out of that corner, boy," Mitchell cried threateningly. "I'll attend to your case. D'ye hear?"

"No. I'm's deaf as er baked lobster," Bob retorted. "What d'ye propose to do, Mickey Angel-oh?"

"I'm going to cut your tongue out, so you can't peach on us!" the superintendent growled, drawing a large, keen-edged clasp-knife from his hip-pocket.

"No! no! better kill him outright than do so terrible a thing as that!" Madam Fayette interposed, shuddering.

"You jest let Mickey alone, will yer, old lace-smuggler?" the bootblack cried. "Mickey Angel-oh knows what he's about. He's tryin' ter do a good turn fer ther 'city dads,' so they'll furnish him a free collar—one o' Sheriff Elliott's pattern!"

"What do you mean?" Mitchell demanded,

with a start. "You needn't try to play game, for your presence here is unknown, and nobody would think of looking here to find you."

"Bet a clam on that? 'Spect mebbe ye'd see Foxy frum N. Y., around heer, purty lively, ef I don't report. Foxy, he's got ther peddgree o' this 'stablishment, too, an' he's arter New York Jonathan, there, like a ferret."

"Bah! you are lying. The New York 'detective does not know you are here."

"Well, ef ye think he don't, jest massacre me, forninst, an' see how soon ye'll git an invite down ter see his Honor," Bob replied, with audacious effrontery.

He was apparently as much at ease facing his three scowling enemies, as though he had been out upon the street singing his old familiar song.

"Bet a clam you'd better let me slide," he continued. "I'm a bad rooster to fight when I've got my spurs sharp, an' I reckon I've got a full hand o' p'int against you. 'Spect I hold the trump, Mickey Angel-oh!"

"And that fact makes it the more important that you should be silenced," the madam interposed. "Swear by the Bible that you will never betray us, in any way or manner, and we will give you your liberty and a hundred dollars. Refuse, and we will lock you up in a room, and let you stay there until you starve! What do you say?"

"I say, go to blazes! I'll take ther room ruther than ter compromise my honor."

"Then you shall have it!" Mitchell cried, savagely. "One life is of no account, compared with three."

The next instant he leaped forward and threw himself upon the Bootblack King, and the two had a lively rough-and-tumble scuffle upon the floor.

The superintendent was much the larger and stronger of the two, and soon gained the mastery, and held Boss Bob pinned to the floor, but not until he had received several vigorous digs in the face, and a punch on the nose that drew the blood.

"Curse you!" he gasped. "I can handle a dozen like you. Bring a rope, madam, and bind his hands and feet."

This was quickly done, and Bob found himself a prisoner, indeed.

Mitchell then arose, and wiped the blood from his face.

"Oh, yer beauty's sp'iled, entirely," the bootblack chuckled, apparently not the least discomfited at his position. "You wouldn't even do fer ther model by a penny chromo. Ef ye'd only 'a' let me got in a few more paralyzers, I'd hev made ye a curiosity fer a circus side-show."

The mill superintendent did not reply, but, together with the madam, withdrew to another part of the room and engaged in a low conversation.

What they said, Boss Bob knew not, but he concluded that they were discussing some plan for his summary disposal.

Sir Frothingham remained near the young prisoner as if to prevent any possibility of his making his escape.

"Well, Johnny, how's biz?" Bob asked,

"Snatched enny cadavers lately? By the way, Johnny, that was an orful whopper you told about bootin' me, up at ther Centenyal. Bet a cross-eyed clam ye ain't got grit enuff ter spit terbacker-juice in a chicken's eye. I usto ter know sech a chap like you, an' he hedn't no more game erbout him then er trained flea hez. Guess you're cut off ther same pattern. What they whisperin' about, Frothy? Tell me, an' I'll present ye wi' a penny chromo next time ther ghost walks."

Frothingham gritted his teeth, and turned his back on the young irrepressible, to hide his rage, but vouchsafed no reply.

"Good! bully fer you," Bob tormented. "I knowed ye was afeard ter compare yer ugly phiz wi' ther countenance of a good-looking face. Never see a peacock w'ot hed lost his tail-feathers, who wazzent ashamed, yet. Don't mourn, Johnny, I'll console ye ther best I know how, even ef ye did boot me up ter ther Centenyal."

And off into another fit of laughter the boot-black went.

Mitchell and the madam concluded their consultation, abruptly, and came forward.

"I'll fix you, my young cocksparrow," the superintendent announced, taking his hat, and leaving the room.

"Hello! what's Mickey Angel up ter now?" demanded Bob, turning to the madam! "Goin' ter git me a sepulker fixed?"

"He is going for chloroform, with which to drug you," was the reply, "and then we'll drown you or—hide you where you'll never be found."

"Bet I get loose—now!" and the youth winked knowingly. "Jest thort o' suthin'. Go ahead wi' yer Fourth o' July circus. We'll see who'll win."

The madam looked puzzled, but did not reply. She and Sir Frothingham retired to the piano, and Boss Bob was left to himself.

"Wonder where Nondescript is!" he muttered. "Ef he was ter git aboard ther trail, we'd hev a reg'lar blud-an'-thunder time. 'Spect I'm ticketed an' checked for Jerusalem, onless there's a Micawber turn-up, d'rectly. Wish I had a novel ter read, ter split ther suspense, but good solid literatoor seem's scarcer around heer than chances o' escape. Ah! footsteps—a reg'lar Hamlet tread, too. 'Spect that's Mickey Angelo returnin' wi' ther chloryforum. Now fer a reg'lar spell of teetotal kerlapse."

It was indeed Mitchell who entered, and he carried a small bottle of colorless liquid in his hand.

With a grim leer at Boss Bob he procured a sponge, and saturated it with the chloroform, and then advancing knelt beside the powerless youth, and held it to his nose.

The effect was what might have been expected.

The Bootblack King was soon utterly insensible of all earthly things, and lay rigid and silent upon the carpet.

"There! he is finally under control," and Mitchell gave a long-drawn breath of relief. "Now, the next thing is to dispose of him. Which way shall it be done?"

"That is a question," Madam Fayette had to answer. "To attempt to get him from the

house is risky, for there is no time o' night when Eighth street is clear of people."

"True; and yet we cannot keep him here, lest Fox the Ferret should come down on us with a search-warrant and discover him!"

"Well, I see no way but what we shall have to smuggle him out, then. I will order my carriage to be before the door at a quarter past three o'clock. We can maybe slip him from the store into the carriage without detection, and make our escape. It seems our only chance."

"Very well. We will play the game, and play to win; but if we fail—"

"He shall die before he can open his lips to betray us," the madam hissed fiercely.

Several hours later, just after the hands on the steeple-clock of the *Times* building pointed out the hour of 3 A. M., a carriage drove carefully out from a narrow by-street upon Eighth street, and came to a halt in front of Madam Fayette's Emporium of Fashions. The carriage was a close one—rather a cab than a carriage—and drawn by a magnificent span of bays, who were in turn held in check by a liveried colored coachman.

The street was apparently deserted now in the immediate vicinity of the millinery store; down the street, further, voices and footsteps were heard.

No sooner did the carriage stop than the door of the store was opened, and a closely wrapped female figure glided forth to the curb, and opened the cab door. The next instant the two men followed her and entered the cab, bearing between them a bundle.

The woman then sprung in after them, and closed the door, and the cab rolled away.

The whole action did not occupy more than two minutes; yet in that short space of time the plotters had been seen.

In a doorway across the street had lain, curled up, a dark object, looking more like a bundle of rags than anything else.

But no sooner had the carriage rolled away up the street than the heap began to unfold, and dissolved into the form of a boy—a queer-looking lad, ragged and dirty in the extreme, and the possessor of a queer, owl-shaped face and big, wild eyes, that had in their glance a power of meaning.

Seizing his blacking kit, the Nondescript—for it was indeed Boss Bob's strange mate—set out at a rapid run up the center of the street in pursuit of the cab.

So swift did he run that he soon caught up with the flying vehicle and climbed upon the trunk-rest, with which it was ornamented. Here he settled himself comfortably, out of sight, and was borne along with the runaways.

Once upon a time, over a year before our story, the Bootblack King had rescued Nondescript from a crowd of young roughs who were pummeling him, and since that the two had involuntarily mated. Even Bob could learn nothing of the strange youth's antecedents, and if any talking was done the Bootblack King invariably had to do two-thirds or more of it, which was by no means an irksome task, as talking was one of his best gifts.

With all the speed the horses could be urged

to, the carriage flew along up North Eighth street, untill it came to Girard avenue, when it was turned suddenly into that thoroughfare and driven furiously on westward.

An occasional policeman would step from his covert, and regard the flying turnout, but wisely refrained, in each instance, from attempting to stop it.

Perched upon the trunk-rest in the rear of the vehicle, the Nondescript sat with a resolute expression on his homely face and a flash to his eyes which betrayed that he enjoyed the exciting ride, while at the same time going to the rescue; for he had seen Boss Bob enter the millinery establishment, and had lounged in the vicinity thereafter until he beheld the form carried out and placed in the cab.

On, on, through Girard avenue dashed the horses and the vehicle—Broad street, with its northern and southern miles of street lamps flitted by, as did the Girard college, and soon the cab dashed out upon the beautifully illuminated Girard avenue bridge.

But the flight was destined to be checked.

One of the overtaken horses stumbled and pitched forward, and failing to regain its equilibrium, went crashing head-foremost down upon the hard Belgian blocking of the bridge.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FERRET'S WORK—BOSS BOB AS A FRESCO ARTIST.

At the same time two men, one of whom was a policeman, hurried up.

"Hello, here!" he cried, addressing the darky coachman, who was just picking himself up out of the dust, where he had been pitched by the fall of the horse. "Why is this carriage out at this time of morning? What are you doing with a horse down?"

"Fo' suah he fell, an' nearly broke dis yar nigger's neck," the coachman apologized, brushing off his clothes, and looking frightened.

"But, what is this carriage racing so for at this time of night?" the officer demanded, suspiciously.

"Dunno, sah. 'Spect I'm driver, an' de madam she told me to drive w'ar she d'rected."

"Who is the madam?"

"Madam Fayette, sah."

"Who else is in the carriage?"

"Marse Mitchell an' Sir Franklyn, sah."

"Humph! do you know these parties?" the officer demanded, addressing his companion, a little, nobbily-attired individual, with black hair, eyes and mustache.

"I have heard of them," was the significant reply. "It is safe enough to venture that they are not out for any particular good."

No stir was made by the inmates of the cab. They were evidently awaiting developments.

The fallen coach horse had regained its feet, and shaken the dust from its glossy hide.

The darky finished brushing himself, and gave a wistful glance toward the seat, as if he were eager to be off.

"Hold on," the officer said, coolly. "Don't be in no hurry to depart, until I am satisfied that all is right. Who is in this establishment besides the parties you have mentioned?"

"No one, sah!"

"Are you sure?"

"Dun suah certain, sah!"

"Don't ye believe him," a voice said, and the Nondescript came around from the rear end of the cab. "They've got my pard, Boss Bob, in there, an' I 'spect they're either a-goin' ter hide or kill him. I see'd 'em put his body in there."

The little man started forward.

"What? Boss Bob, the bootblack?" he interrogated, eagerly.

The Nondescript nodded.

"Then we must know the reason of this," the little chap said, who was none other than Fox, the New York Ferret. "Open the door, officer, and let's sift this matter, for there's dark work at the bottom of it."

Without hesitation the policeman obeyed, by stepping forward and throwing open the cab door.

"Hello, here!" he cried, peering in. "Have you got a lad here called Boss Bob?"

"We have," Mitchell replied. "What of it?"

"Much of it—so much that I want to know what you are doing with him," the officer replied, sternly, and seizing the heels of the drugged boy, he pulled him out of the wagon. "You have placed yourself in suspicious circumstances, and it is my duty to investigate the matter."

"Pshaw! You are having your trouble for your pains," Mitchell averred, "for we are all too well known to be suspected. I am the superintendent of the Turnover Calico Mills!"

"It don't make any difference—not ef you were old Stokely himself," was the blunt reply.

"You've had an insensible boy in your carriage, and I'd be pleased to have you inform me what you are going to do with him?"

"We are going to take him to the house of a friend of mine, at Elm Station, to recuperate. He was taken very ill, to-night, and we thought it best to get him out of the city," Madam Fayette answered. "Oh! sir, please do not delay us, as it may be the means of hastening his death, and we could never forgive ourselves or you."

"I'll see to the lad myself," the officer replied, in a gruff way. "If I see any need to arrest you, I'll know where to find you. Drive on, you nigger."

The darky hastily mounted the box, and the cab rolled away, leaving four figures remaining on the bridge.

"It was lucky we chanced along, just as we did," Ferret said, "or one of Philadelphia's best detective lights would have in all probability been squelched."

"No; Boss Bob got rescued by me," the Nondescript said. "I Boss Bob's pard—I dog cab—rescue Bob."

"Well, my boy, you deserve credit," the detective said. "Bob had been in the Fayette place, before his trip in the cab, had he not?"

"Yes. Went in about noon. Jes' cum out a little while ago—was carried out."

"Good! He probably discovered something of importance, and rather than have him use it against them, they decided to put him out of the way," Fox said. "Let's see if he is dead or living."

"He is insensible from the fact that he has been liberally fed with chloroform," the official guessed. "I smelt it the moment I opened the

cab. The better plan is to take him home and let him recover from the effects of the drug at his leisure."

"I do not know that he has a home," Fox confessed. "Do you know where he lives, boy?" turning to the Nondescript.

"Guess he hain't got any," the lad replied, "'cept it is in the doorways, an' coal-houses an' w'arfs."

"Well, then, I'll take charge of him, and see that he is properly cared for. You can go on, officer, and we'll take him up to the Trans-Continental, by slow stages, and see to him."

The officer accordingly trudged away on his beat, and then Fox and the Nondescript raised the inactive Bootblack King in their arms, and bore him along the gloomy avenue toward the Trans-Continental hotel, located at the intersection of Belmont and Elm avenues.

Boss Bob was a solid weight, despite his boyish size, and ere the distance between the bridge and the hotel was traversed, the detective and the Nondescript were glad to pause several times and rest.

The great hostelry was finally reached, however, and owing to the fact that it was Fox's stopping-place, they had no trouble in gaining an admittance, and securing a temporary lodging-room for the insensible bootblack.

Here Boss Bob was stretched out upon the bed in a comfortable position, and left in charge of the Nondescript.

The detective then took his departure, promising to return in the morning.

It was near break of day ere Boss Bob recovered from the effects of the chloroform, sufficiently to be able to sit up in bed, and recognize his true and tried friend, the Nondescript.

"Well, I'm an eyster ef I ain't in old U. S., yet, alive an' kickin'," was his first exclamation, on gazing at his surroundings. "Hello! you heer, 'Script? Well, that settles it—I'm still this side o' Jordan, right side up wi' care. Didn't know but mebbe I'd wake up an' heer the angels playin' on the golden harp an' banjo, or else I'd be playin' seven-up wi' old Neptune; but seems I didn't make a go of it. What's the rip, 'Script? Whose gay, palatial domersile ar' we occerpyin', now?"

"We are at the Trans," the strange boy replied, briefly.

"Oh, we aire. Well, we're in tune, then. Fu'st time I ever salubriated in sech quarters. But, how'd we git heer, 'Script? Last I reckon, Mickey Angel Mitchell was stuffin' me wi' perfume o' chlora, or sum uther form."

The Nondescript related what had occurred, and Boss Bob listened, attentively.

"Well, ef et ain't a reg'lar three-act dramy, I don't never swaller another clam—that's all. An' thet Foxy is a hoss—prowidin' he settles my hotel bill."

When Fox came in in the morning, Bob was thoroughly himself again, and related his adventure and what he had learned, all of which the New Yorker heard with a satisfied expression of countenance, and jotted down.

"They are a precious pair of rogues," he said; "and I shall give them my personal attention. You did not find the jewels?"

"No. I did not git thru' the 'stablishment

afore I was nabbed. 'Spect mebbe ther jewelry was funder up."

"Perhaps. I'll keep the Fayette place under surveillance, at any rate. Your own course of action you can choose for yourself. If you find any points, I'll take them off your hands for cash. How much do you want for what you have told me about the smuggling, and the grave-robbing biz?"

"Nary a red. 'Spect I've got a 2-X an' a V fer that," Bob replied. "Ef I find out any more p'int, ye'll heer from us ag'in. Goin' ter take in the body-snatchin' matinee up at Fernwood?"

"No. I'll let this thing lag a little, too, and things will eventually work around, so that they will resume business, and they can then be caught in the act."

Bob nodded, and he and the Nondescript directly took their leave.

That afternoon, Michael Angelo Mitchell was sitting on the veranda that fronted the entrance to the calico mills, engaged in reading and smoking. It was a custom of his to thus lounge at his ease, and sun himself, while he glanced over the daily markets, encouraged the cigar trade by evaporating innumerable cigars, and topping off by inspecting every person that chanced to pass along the street. Sometimes too, he would fall into a sound repose for an hour or two, while basking in the sunlight, and this afternoon was no exception to the rule, for, after digesting the contents of several papers, he dropped off into a doze, with his hat slouched over his eyes.

He had not been asleep for more than ten minutes, when Boss Bob and the Nondescript came along and spied him.

A grin of delight came upon the face of the Bootblack King, as he saw his enemy of the previous night, and he nudged the owl faced boy vigorously.

"D'ye see Mickey Angel-oh! a-sittin' there on the platform, 'Script?"

The Nondescript nodded.

"Well, I'm goin' ter come a game on his nibs," Bob said, with a nod. "Bet a clam I'll make him luk like a sarcus clown afore I git thr'u' wi' him. Now you jest listen, an' I'll let ye inter ther secret. D'ye see these?"

And he drew a sponge and a half-filled bottle of liquid from his ragged coat-pocket.

"Well, ye see, this is what Mickey Angel-oh perfumed me with last night, an' when you an' Foxy cum ter ther rescue, he probably stuffed it inter my pocket out o' sight. Leastways, I found et thar. Now, since old Mickey slumbers so placidly, I'm goin' ter make him sleep er little placider, jest fer fun. Jest ye stay heer, now, an' tell me when any one is comin', an' I'll make Mickey Angel-oh! so purty he won't know hisself—all because he give me a lift last night."

The big eyes of the Nondescript sparkled with delight as he nodded his assent, for he was as fond of practical joking as his eccentric companion.

The street on which the calico mills were located was built up with big factory buildings,

used for various manufactories, and chanced to be deserted of pedestrians at that hour.

With a glance around him, Bob dashed some chloroform upon the sponge, and mounting the steps to the platform where Mitchell was tipped back in his chair, sound asleep, he applied the sponge to the unsuspecting victim's nose.

It took but a couple of moments to accomplish the object, and Bob believed he had drugged the superintendent so that he would be powerless for an hour or so.

Taking another glance at his surroundings to make sure he was not observed, he next drew a rusty but keen-edged pair of scissors from his pocket, and deliberately proceeded to shear off what hirsute covering vegetated upon Mitchell's face, finally accomplishing the job with a satisfied chuckle, and receiving as his reward a grin of approbation from the Nondescript.

Upon the conclusion of this performance, the young gamin dodged into the mill, and was gone several minutes, finally returning with a box containing several bottles of fancy-colored inks, such as were used in printing calicoes.

Armed with a penciling brush, Boss Bob rapidly decorated the countenance of the unconscious superintendent with the bright dyes, until his face looked a cross between that of a circus clown and a full-blooded Sioux on the war-path. Bright crimson spots ornamented the cheeks; the nose had the deep bloom of a blood-red peony; the mouth was made to look as if stretched from ear to ear by the application of lip-colored dyes; the ears were green, the chin black, the forehead a variety of gray hues.

Altogether, by the time the Bootblack King had finished, the countenance of Michael Angelo Mitchell was a brilliant specimen of the frescoer's art.

Then it was that Boss Bob stood off a pace and regarded it with hugest satisfaction.

"Hain't he a reg'lar old up an' down Centenyal beauty, tho'?" he laughed, addressing the Nondescript. "Better nor a valentine or a forty-dollar two-sheet circus cut, or a penny chromo. Wonder what he'll say when he luks in ther looking-glass? 'Spect he'll take hizself fer old Dan Rice on a lecture toor. Won't the gals cod him tho' ef they ketch him? S'pose we hide across the street, 'Script, an' enjoy ther fun?"

And accordingly the two gamins began to cast about them for a place of concealment.

Just opposite the mill was a lumber and brick yard combined, the view of which from the street was obstructed by a close board fence.

In less time than it takes to relate it, Bob and 'Script were ensconced upon the opposite side of this fence, each with an eye glued to a convenient knot-hole, and here they waited patiently for the anticipated entertainment.

It was not long before some one came along—a richly-dressed and aristocratic-looking lady, accompanied by an insignificant-looking little Spitz poodle, who instantly spied Mitchell, and began barking furiously.

"Hush, Fido! What is the matter with you?" the lady cried, glancing around.

The next instant, when just opposite, she spied the decorated superintendent, and uttering a

scream, fled quickly on, as if fearful of personal harm, and a wild hoot from Boss Bob seemed to increase her alarm, and she literally made the dust fly, so fast she ran, while Bob and the Nondescript lay back on the ground convulsed with laughter.

"Oh! this is better than a Jersey watermelon!" Bob gasped, between spasms. "Who comes next?"

It proved to be a gang of young wharf urchins, with strings of fish in hand—a good half-score of them.

A roar of laughter escaped them as they spied Mitchell, and a halt was the order.

"Shoot the clown—bad luck to him!" said one.

"He's drunker than a bummer!" assured a second. "Oh! ain't he sweet! Say, boys, that's Mitchell, w'ot fired us out o' the mill one day. S'pose we plug him wid cuds o' tobacco?"

Accordingly, quids of that article were thrown at the superintendent's phiz, most of them hitting him, and many of them sticking to his face, until he presented one of the worst spectacles one could imagine!

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWS FOR JUDGE TURNOVER.

BOSS BOB and the Nondescript would not have been boys, if they did not hugely enjoy this sport, and they indulged in subdued roars of laughter from their place of concealment.

The young street urchins finally tired of their fun, and marched away, and Mitchell was not further molested until the six o'clock whistle blew, when a flock of girls came swarming from the mill and discovered the nobby superintendent, just as he had struggled to his feet, recovered from the effects of the chloroform.

"Oh! my—look at the clown!" cried one.

"Girls, look! It's the super," added another.

"Hello! Humpty-Dumpty-sat-on-the wall!" a third vouchsafed, giving Mitchell a punch in the ribs. "What menagerie did you come from?"

"Faith, sure, it's Barnum, so it is," a big, raw-boned Irish girl declared. "Bedad, didn't he dhrive mules for me Uncle Terrance O'Shaughnessy?"

"Girls, what can this mean?" Flora Bacon cried, coming forward. "Don't you see—it's the superindendent, Mr. Mitchell?"

"What's the matter?" the superintendent roared, beginning to claw the quids of tobacco away, which stuck to different parts of his countenance. "Who's been peppering me with stale quids of tobacco? Curse you, what are you all grinning and tittering at? I see nothing so very funny to laugh at?"

"Bridget, bring the mirror from the office," Flora ordered as she laughed, "and let the superintendent look at himself."

The Irish girl obeyed, and Mitchell gazed at the reflection of his decorated face, horrors'ruck with astonishment, a frightful oath finally escaping his lips.

"Were you trying to impart the bloom of youth to your cheek, Mr. Mitchell, or are you practicing at scene painting?" Flora asked.

"Ten thousand devils!" the superintendent roared. "I have been the victim of an accursed

plot. Who did this? Show me the person, quick! Did any of you girls do it, curses on you?"

"No, the girls did not do it!" Flora Bacon cried. "We have all been in the mill. It has been some outside parties, who, seeing you sleeping here, as you usually do, have taken advantage of the fact and played a joke on you."

"It's a cursed thin joke!" Mitchell growled, "and I must be thick-headed to sleep so soundly. Call a policeman, some of you, and I'll have a search made. It'll be a dear job, or I am an infernal liar."

"Then you didn't really do it yourself, eh?" Flora asked, tantalizingly.

"Of course not, you fool," was the savage and ungallant retort. "Do you suppose I'd daub my face up in this manner, and shave off my beard, just for the sake of masquerading? I have been insulted—outraged, and I'll kill the man who did it, if I get my hands on him."

"D'yez hear the likes of 'im, girruls?" exclaimed Bridget McAfee, with a grin. "Go 'long wid yez, Misther Mitchell. It was thryin' to make a curiosity aff yoursel', ye waz, shure, for Barnum's Mooseum, an' I know it, bedad."

And then the girls trooped off down the street, leaving the unfortunate superintendent of the calico mills to get out of his scrape as best he could.

Having now laughed themselves hoarse, Boss Bob and the Nondescript concluded to get out of the neighborhood, which they did by crossing through the lumber-yard to the adjoining street.

The Philadelphia *Star* on the following morning had an item, as follows:

"A well-known superintendent of a city calico factory, while taking a snooze yesterday afternoon, was painted up in a most artistic manner, by some unknown practical joker, and the worst of the joke is that the dyes used obstinately refuse to yield to the persuasion of soap and water. 'Snoozers' take warning."

Judge Randolph Turnover, the miser-millionaire, lived in a handsome stone mansion in an aristocratic part of West Philadelphia, alone and uncared for, with the exception of a staid, reliable old English man-servant, who had been in his employ for twenty years.

The judge was a recluse from society, and quite unpopular, from the fact that he was not sociable to any one except those with whom business relations brought him in contact.

Only a very few had ever boasted of an invitation to his home, but they spoke in flattering terms of its magnificent and liberal adornments.

In regard to wealth, the judge was said to have no end to it, owning besides his extensive mills, other real estate, many shares in a street railway, and mining stocks. No one knew just what he was worth, but the wise ones considered it safe enough to class him a millionaire.

Although called a miser, because he was close and shrewd in business matters, he was regarded as scrupulously honest, never having been known to take a penny that was not rightfully his own.

Philanthropy was not one of his characteristics; yet he had often been known to give large sums of money to suffering families, that came

under his notice, but decidedly refused to donate alms to funds to be disbursed by some "institution" run by salaried officers. He was not an extremely old man, scarcely more than five and forty years having passed over his head; yet his hair and whiskers were plainly streaked with gray, and he walked with an infirm step, supported by a cane, as might have become a man twenty years his senior.

On the morning, or rather forenoon, following the events last narrated, the judge sat in his cosy office in a block upon Chestnut street, engaged in looking over a morning paper, when the door opened, and a visitor entered.

The visitor was no less a personage than the Bootblack King, Boss Bob—ragged and dirty as ever, with his feet bare, hat cocked upon one side of his face, a stub of a cigar in his mouth, and his blacking box slung upon his arm.

The judge looked up with a frown from his newspaper, as he saw this genius of the street. Bootblacks seldom troubled him, from the fact that he never employed their services or tolerated their solicitations, and therefore he naturally wondered why came this lad.

"Well, sir!" he said, stiffly, "I do not want my boots blacked, so you can retire, and be sure and close the door after you."

Boss Bob uttered a whistle denoting surprise, and deposited his anatomy into the handiest cushioned arm-chair.

"Who in blazes said ye wanted yer boots blacked?" he demanded, after eying the judge a moment. "Didn't say even 'leather,' when I made my grand entree, an' heer you're givin' me a invite ter bounce! S'pose a feller's got 'portant bizness—what then?"

"You can have no business with me," was the reply, "and I have no time for trifling, sir, so you'd better go."

"Bet a clam it'll take ther hull o' Stokely's gang to budge me, afore I git ready," Bob declared. "Allus was famuss hard ter git rid of, w'en I didn't want'er go. So ye 'spect 'cause a feller ain't a cut-an'-dried fine-cut swell, he ain't got no bizness ter 'tend ter, eh?"

"It is not usual for bootblacks to be overburdened with important matters," was the terse reply. "However, if you have anything of particular moment, to offer, I will hear what it is, if you are brief."

And the millionaire's eyes returned to the paper in front of him.

"Well, you're Judge Turnover, I s'pose, ain't ye?—the straight bony-fried article?" Bob asked, after a moment.

"I am Judge Turnover, sir. What of it?"

"Oh! I wanted ter be sure," was the independent reply. "Allus be sure o' yer p'int afore ye show yer hand is w'ot Milt Nobles gits off in the 'Phoenix,' an' et ain't a bad idea. Own a sheer in ther — line street keers, don't ye, an' a caliker factory?"

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"Tho'tso. Had yer status jotted down in my skull-box, but wassent sure. Got a feller in yer employ named Mickey Mitchell?"

"Michael Angelo Mitchell is the superintendent of my factory."

"Know'd it. We call 'im Mickey, or Mickey Angel-oh, fer short. Sweet-scented June bug,

that Mickey is. Heer about how he got frescoed yesterday?"

"Yes. It was an outrage."

"Guess he did spill out rage, sum, when he see'd his phiz. Feller 'twould do such a mean caper orter be shot."

"That is true," the judge agreed.

"But et was a good fit fer Mickey Angel-oh, tho'," Bob continued. "'Spect it tuk a little o' the starch out o' him. He's a bad egg, is Mickey."

"You speak disrespectfully of one who is your superior, sir."

"What! Mickey Angel-oh Mitch my superior!" Bob exclaimed. "Guess not. 'Spect Mickey's pedigree couldn't outweigh mine, no-how ye could fix it. Mebbe I know more about him than you do. Yes, sir-ee. He's a reg'lar hoss, an' associates wi' a hoss-eater—smuggles laces—snatches bodies, an' sech like. Fine coon fer ther head of sum big office, like breakin' stones or chawin' iron bars, down at Moyamen-sing. Ther idca o' Mickey Angel-oh a-bein's good as me! et won't go down worth a clam. I'm ther King o' Bootblacks, at your service; Mickey, he's the King o' Rogues."

"Boy! what do you mean? You had better be careful about accusing Mr. Mitchell of anything wrong, or you may get yourself into trouble. I regard him as a gentleman of honor and integrity."

"Then you've got a heap better opinion of him than I hev," Bob said. "Jes' wait till he claps a chloryform sponge over yer smellin' protuberance, an' ye'll change yer toon, I'll bet er clam."

"I cannot believe ill of my superintendent, no matter what *you* would say," the judge said. "If that is all of your business, to slander him, you may take your departure."

"Hold up, boss; don't git r'ily, just because I happened to enumerate sum hints about Mickey Angelo's sinfulness. 'Spect et don't do no harm ter sift ashes, fer ye kin allus find clinkers. But thet ain't ther prime object o' my comin' heer. I've got another card to play, an' et's a trump, bet yer boots. So first, let me ask ef ye didn't uster own a wife an' a quarter dozen o' children or so?"

The judge looked surprised.

"How did you learn this?" he asked.

"Oh! I found it out. I allus am diggin' up p'int, when I ain't diggin' Centenyal mud off of boots an' gaiters. But you have not answered my question yet."

"Well, acknowledging that I may have been the possessor of a wife and children, what of it?" was the query.

"Oh! I thort ye might kinder like ter heer from 'em," Bob replied, importantly. "The hand o' time is leadin' us all toward ther tomb, an' afore we shuffle off, we ginerally like to overhaul our relates in search of a suitable heir, 'specially when we've got swads o' solid cash collatteral. Therefore, seein' thet in all probability ye weren't booked fer many more seasons heer below, I 'spect ye might like to know what had become of yer heirs an' representertives."

"Perhaps *you* would like to set yourself up as one of them?" the judge said, sarcastically.

"Wal, I don't know as I would have any pertic'ler objections," Bob replied, surveying his reflection in a mirror just opposite. "Allus did hev an eyedear thet I was ther lost heir o' royal patronage, or of some president or alderman. But, guess I steered a leetle in thet calculation, wi' my eye glued on ther dome o' ther capitol, an' so I ain't averse ter comin' down a few, as Turnovers ain't ter be sneezed at w'en a feller's hungry."

"I presume not. But be brief. If you have anything interesting for me to know, I will hear you, but if not, you must go."

"Hain't very particuler whether ye scrape up acquaintance, then, or not?"

"I am in no hurry to see the woman whom I once called wife," the judge replied, bitterly. "The children I of course would dearly like to see, but have never been able to find the least trace of them."

"Your wife vamoosed didn't she, an' tuk the progeny along?" Bob questioned.

"She deserted me, yes, taking the children with her, and has never darkened my door since."

"What was the name of the little kids?"

"Their names and ages were, respectively: Adele, seven; Florence, five, and Harry four years. This was at the time they were taken from me. Adele, if living, would now be twenty, Florence eighteen, and Harry seventeen."

"Harry—that's me, mebbe?" Bob observed, with a grin. 'Spect I'll hev ter interview old Maloney on that. Ye see, my parents are supposed to be Mr. an' Mrs. Maloney, but as Maloney is Irish, I'm Yank, an' Mrs. Maloney is Dutch, I ken't see how I'm their own kid. Mebbe ef I was to stir the thing up, I'd turn out ter be the missing Turnover?"

"I hardly think so," the judge said, gravely. "You are not at all like my pale, intelligent little boy of thirteen years ago."

Boss Bob gave vent to a prolonged whistle.

"Dunno about that," he replied scratching his head as if in search of ideas. "'Spect I'm as intellergent as ther average, an' as fer bein' pale, I reckon blackin' boots an' white livers don't match."

"You said you might be able to prove yourself the missing Turnover. They are all missing, for that matter."

"Bet a shuck eyster they ain't. I've got the female portion all nailed. 'Spect yer first gal, Addie, is dead. T'other one works in the city, nearer to you than you've got any idea of. The old leddy she's here, too, engaged in sum gun games that promise to land her in Moya, ef she don't let up!"

"Boy, what is this you say? Are you making it up, or is it true?" the millionaire cried, excitedly.

"It's as true as thet thar is dorgs in bony-fried bologna!" Bob replied, emphatically. "'Spect I orter know, when I heerd ther madam tell certain parties as how she war once yer wife but shuk you; an' heerd her tell as how Flora Bacon war her child an' yours, an' also Adele, who was ther wife o' New York Johany, the thief, but is now dead."

Mr. Turnover groaned aloud.

"My daughter the wife of a thief?" he gasped. "God forbid!"

"Yas, she was married ter New York Johnny, alias Sir Franklyn Frothin'ham an' is dead. Frothin'ham has sold her body to the physicians an' that is one reason why I come to interview you."

"Sir Franklyn Frothingham, did you say?—Sir Franklyn Frothingham?"

"That's ther perzact coon, who is known over in N. Y. as New York Johnny. He is a red-hot rascal, an' is in league with Madam Fayette, Mickey Angel-oh Mitch, an' a lot o' others, who make a bizness of smuggling in laces from fureign parts, an' also supplyin' ther doctors with cada-vers to dissect. I heerd this posey tell the madam and Mickey that now that his wife was done an' gone dead, he was goin' ter make a spec' by sellin' it fer dissection."

"Who is the madam you speak of?"

"Oh! she's a French hoss-eater, in yer eye. Sails under ther name o' Madam Fayette, milliner—uster be Mrs. Judge Turnover."

"And you say she, Mitchell and this man Frothingham are leagued together in criminal machinations?"

"Bet yer boots I do!"

"By heaven, this is very strange. She is even a worse creature, it seems, than I deemed her. This Frothingham I have heard of before. A Frenchwoman came to me a few days since, with a recommendation from him, saying that she had served faithfully in his family."

Bob leaped to his feet, excitedly.

"Hurra!" he cried, "I'm on a reg'lar Buffler Bill trail at last, for I'll bet a clam she's the same woman w'ot tried ter drown Frothin'ham's an' Adele's baby in the Delaware. Quick! git yer hat, old gent, and show me yer hoss-eater!"

CHAPTER IX.

BOSS BOB METAMORPHOSED.

MR. TURNOVER, too, seemed in a measure excited, but crushed his feelings with a strong hand.

"You speak most strangely, boy," he said. "Tell me what you know, and all you know, in order that I may be able to arrive at some definite conclusion."

"Hain't got much more to tell, till I see sum collateral ahead. I allers work fer collateral, I do, an' let gratitude go to blazes. A fistful o' collateral goes funder toward satisfyin' a feller's stummick, than a huckster cart-load of gratitude."

"So I dare say," the judge replied, with a nod of approval, "and you shall be well rewarded, when you have told me all and proven your assertions."

"That's O. K., but in this case I ain't workin' fer capertal alone. I'm figgerin' on countin' in as one o' the Turnover family."

"Ah! my boy, your hope of that is groundless. You are not one of my kin."

"Dunno 'bout that," Bob observed, squinting again into the looking-glass. "I think you an' I do look some alike, ef thar was a few daubs o' Bixby's Best scrubbed off my countenance. S'posin' I should turn out to be the lost Harry Turnover—what then? 'Spect ye wouldn't own

me as a repersentative o' the Turnover brigade, eh?"

"If you were able to prove that you were my son, I should gladly welcome and raise you from your present position. But I guess there will be no danger of such a thing."

"Don't you bet high on that," Bob assured, with a grin. "I'll go a salt-water clam that I am a Turnover. Kinder feel it in my bones, ye see. Then, thar's a heap o' chance, too. Ye see, when your poorer-haff cut loose from you, she chucked the g'hals inter the almshouse, an' ther b'hoy was apprenticed ter ther captain of a whalin' vessel, ter receive whalin's, an' princerpally becawse he was famous at spoutin'. Now, in ther natteral course o' hooman events, et ain't improbable that, when a little kid, the salt breeze didn't suit my complexion, an' I was adopted inter the Maloney family. It's worth lookin' into, ennyhow."

"But you haven't told me where to find my youngest daughter yet?" the judge said, eagerly; "or my eldest daughter's child, which you say you rescued from the river?"

"Oh! they're safe, whar I know where ter put my hands on 'em, at any time," Bob said. "Fer ther present you an' I've got ter tend ter other biz, which is, we've got ter find whar Adele was buried, an' see ef she's been disturbed. If not, so good—let her rest whar she is. If she's bin dug up, then we've got ter raise a reg'lar Buffler Bill breeze, an' find out the why an' wherefore. We'll swoop down on Patrick McFadden's morgue, and see if we can find the body before it is disposed of for dissection."

"My boy, I am with you heart and hand. But, how are we to find, in this great city, where, how or when my poor child was buried?"

"Oh! I'll manage that. You jest let me do ther engineerin', an' you play up passenjar, an' we'll get along first-rate. Furst of all, I want interview this French hoss-eater ye say was recommended ter you by Frothin'ham. 'Spect I can tell in a holy secont ef she be my water-mellon, an' ef so, I'll slice her up so we kin git sum more p'int. Better we git ter bizness ter oncet, too, fer ther sooner we do, the more apt we are to be successful."

"I am ready at once, but you are not," the judge said. "No matter who you are, you are too smart a lad to look so dirty and ragged, and you must get thoroughly clean and respectable in appearance, ere I will have aught to do with you. Here are a hundred dollars. Take it, and return to me looking like a young gentleman, instead of a ragamuffin. There is a Turkish bath-house below here: go there first and get cleaned up, and then repair to Wanamaker's and get clothed. Then return to me and I'll be ready."

"Keere-t. I allers is willing to snatch seen snaps bald-headed," Bob said with a grin. "When I git togged out folks 'll spect I'm a half-cousin ter Dom Pedro, 'Lysses Grant, or sum other big gun."

And with a hearty laugh he accepted the hundred-dollar note from the judge and departed.

"Bet a clam I'm made!" he muttered, when he once more gained the street. "Thet Turnover is a reg'lar paragon, an' ef I can only make out

that I'm Harry Turnover, I'm solid fer third term Vice-presidency in '80, along wi' 'Lysses Grant. It now stands twixt me an' Terrance Maloney whether I'm a Turnover or not, an' there's got ter be an interview, you bet! But first, I'm goin' ter find out ther body of Adele, or the judge an' I go bankrupture—that's flat!"

Two hours later there emerged from Wanmaker's Chestnut street furnishing store a young gentleman, whose features might have been recognized as belonging to Boss Bob—but that was all.

No other trace of the former bootblack was visible, the form being incased in a rich and fashionable outfit of clothing, with patent-leather boots upon his feet, and a "stove-pipe" hat of the latest style cocked upon his head, the face of which was as clean and bright as soap and water could make it. He also sported a kid-gloved hand and gold-headed cane, with considerable loud jewelry about his person, and a good cigar between his teeth—his whole appearance being decidedly flashy.

"Ha! ha! wonder how I look!" he muttered, glancing at his reflection in the shop window, as he passed along. "'Spect I look like a reg'lar Long Branch swell. Wonder if any o' my old pals will twig my nibs?"

It was not long ere he had a chance to test the matter, for he saw the Nondescript and another bootblack coming down the street.

Bracing up and adjusting a pair of gold-rimmed glasses to his nose, the metamorphosed Bootblack King strutted importantly along, not deigning to give his former associates so much as a glance. But just after he had passed them, he was conscious that they had stopped, and he accordingly paused before a store window, to hear if possible, their remarks.

"Say, 'Script, did ye see thet gallus cove who jest passed?—there he stands at the windy, now!" the Nondescript's companion asked.

"Yes, I see'd him," the Nondescript replied, "Slings on entirely too much style fer a bootblack."

"A bootblack!" the other ejaculated.

"Why, yes. Didn't ye know him? That was my old pard, Boss Bob. Guess he don't notice common folks, since he's got togged out new.

Boss Bob turned upon the boys, with a grin.

"Yes, I do, 'Scrip," he said. "I allus know my friends. Was jest playin' off, ter see ef ye'd reckernize me. Know'd et wouldn't be a go, tho', fer what's born in ther blood can't be scrubbed out wi' Turk baths, ner be hid under good togs. Don't I luk scrumpshus, tho'?"

"Yes—ye look like a reg'lar penny grab nabob," the Nondescript replied. "What's struck ye, Bob?"

"Oh! I'm erbout bein' nomernated fer Prime Minister ter Injy," the boy replied with comical importance. "Struck er reg'lar Buffler Bill bonanzer, ye see. Call around to McFadden's Funeral Reposertory, ter-night, an' I'll talk with ye. Tra-la-la-la!"

And then the new Boss Bob marched on, with as much pomposity as a Third street money-king, leaving the two gamins to stare in open-mouthed amazement.

As Bob re-entered the office of Judge Turnover, the millionaire regarded him with a smile.

"You've certainly made a great improvement in your looks, at least," he admitted. "And now, if you are ready, I will order my carriage, and we'll go to my home in the West End. I am anxious to regain possession of the body of my poor lost child, whom I have been robbed of for thirteen long weary years."

The carriage was accordingly ordered, and entering, the twain were driven rapidly West-Philadelphia-ward.

Ere long after they had crossed the Schuylkill, they were landed before a large stone mansion in an aristocratic portion of the West End, the house in turn being set in a fine lawn fringed with trees and flowering shrubs.

Dismissing the cab, Judge Turnover and Boss Bob entered the house, and traversed a magnificent hallway, finally bringing up in a tastily furnished apartment used as a sort of library and private office, evidently, judging by the desks and bookcases.

"Be seated," the judge said, "and I will summon Felice."

"All right. Jest don't w'isper ter her who I am, an' she'll not know me, an' be on her guard. I'm wuss'n a Philadelphia lawyer at analyzin' a person, ef I get 'em cornered, that way."

The Judge nodded, and left the room, but soon returned, accompanied by the French-woman, Felice, who was attired in a satin wrapper, and rigged out "to kill," as Bob at once commented, in under his breath.

"Felice, be seated," the judge said, locking the door behind him. "There is a serious charge preferred against you, which I'd like you to account for."

"A charge against me, sir!" she cried, flushing, and directing a startled glance toward Boss Bob. "Of what nature, sir?"

"The charge is of attempted murder, ma'am. Did you not come with a recommend to me, claiming that you were directed to me by an English baronet, Sir Franklyn Frothingham by name?"

"I did, sir."

"But how is it? This Frothingham proves to be a notorious New York scoundrel, by the title of New York Johnny—a pickpocket, thief and burglar."

"Who says this?" Felice demanded, angrily.

"Ahem! I am so fortunate as to have the honor of making that assertion," Bob said, thrusting his thumbs under his armpits and bowing mockingly.

"And who are you, pray?"

"Robert Burns Maloney, at your service, ma'm—Boss Bob, King o' Bootblacks, fer short," was answered, with a grin. "'Spect I reckernize you, too."

"You recognize me, sir?"

"Yas; 'spect I do. You're ther same woman who set Adele's baby afloat on the river in an open boat. Guess I can tell a clam from an eyster when I see it."

Felice half-rose from her seat, a deadly light in her eyes, but she sunk back the next minute, very pale.

"This is infamous!" she gasped.

"But true, nevertheless," Judge Turnover said sternly. "You are cornered, woman, and

it will be better for you to own up. A few mornings since, Boss Bob, here, saw a woman set an innocent babe adrift upon the Delaware River. He, however, promptly went to the rescue, and placed the child in safe care. Since then he learned from Frothingham's own lips that you attended his wife in her last moments, and made away with the child, who is my grandchild, as Adele was my daughter. Therefore, when Bob heard me mention you, he at once recognized you. Now, what have you to say for yourself?"

Felice covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"I beg—I beg!" she cried, piteously. "Only promise that you will spare me and give me my liberty, and I will confess all!"

"Do so, then, and you will not be prosecuted, so far as I am concerned. If you have sinned, I will not be your judge, for there is One who will sooner or later judge all things justly," Mr. Turnover said, gravely.

"Then I will confess, and look elsewhere for employment," Felice said. "The recommend I brought to you was one of my own manufacture, and Frothingham had nothing to do with it. In the first place, I was employed by Mrs. Adele to nurse her and her child during her sickness. Frothingham had nothing to do with hiring or paying me; and Adele being poor, I did not receive much pay.

"Before she died, I for the first became aware that Frothingham was her husband—but he had deserted her, and never came near her. Every time he saw me, he paid me the most kind attention, and I rather liked him for it. Also, before Adele died, she told me that you were her father, but she did not dare intrude herself upon you, lest you should treat her as an impostor. She got me to promise, however, that when she was dead, I would bring her child to you, and beg of you to care for it. This I should have done, undoubtedly, only that Frothingham intercepted me, and induced me to drown the child, under a promise of large pay. It was after I set the babe adrift, that I conceived the plan of coming here, and trying to win your affections and your wealth. That is all. I have nothing more to confess. I have sinned, and am sorry, and thankful that I am guilty of no crime—which I am not, as you say the child was rescued."

"You may be thankful that Boss Bob took the burden of an awful crime from your shoulders!" the judge said, sternly.

"There are some other questions I would ask you. Boss Bob, here, heard Frothingham indicate that it was his intention to steal the body of my child, and dispose of it to the doctors for dissection. Did you hear anything of this?"

"Sir Franklyn told me so—that is all I know about it. Whether he did so, or not, I am unable to say."

"What doctor attended my poor child in her last moments?"

"Dr. —, of No. — South street. He seemed to do everything he knew how, but her disease was a complicated one that baffled his skill."

"Do you know where the body was buried? We would like to find it."

"I do not know. The physician took charge

of it, promising to give it a decent burial at his own expense."

Judge Turnover turned to Boss Bob.

"Our next move is, then, to hunt up the physician, and have an investigation made of the grave, is it not?"

"Yes. 'Spect that's ther best course. Ef we don't find things right, then, we'll take a scull eround ter Patrick McFadden's Morgue. Goin' ter let ther hoss-eater go?"

"Felice can go," the judge replied. "I shall not be in need of her services any longer."

Without a word, the Frenchwoman arose and left the room, accompanied by the judge, who went to see that she took nothing with her that did not belong to her.

He was gone some time, but at last returned to Bob.

"We will now visit the physician, and learn from him, if possible, where Adele was buried," he said, gravely. "Do you remember the number of the street?"

"Bet I do! Never lose sech p'int as them, I don't," was the reply. "Come erlong, an' we'll find the pill shop without trouble. 'Spect I know ther physician. Shined around his hired gal last summer, an' collected some live stock w'ich I disposed of dog cheap."

They left the mansion, and walked to Chestnut street, where they took the cars, and in due time found themselves in the presence of the physician who had attended Adele Frothingham.

After listening to the judge's explanation of their business, the physician said:

"I did attend the young woman until her death, and learning the case of her wrongs, I took pity on her, and had her remains interred in my family plot at Woodland Cemetery. If her remains have been disturbed, it is without my knowledge. I will accompany you to the cemetery if you wish, and we will make an investigation of the case at once."

CHAPTER X.

MORE PLOTTING.

THE trio soon left the physician's office, and walked toward a livery stable near by, where they proposed to hire a cab to take them to the cemetery.

On their way they met Fox, the New York Ferret, whom Boss Bob at once hailed, and apprised of their mission, and the detective readily consented to accompany them.

"Did ye do anything fer ther game yet?" Bob asked.

"No; I kept a watch but did not strike a trail. I guess the schemers kept shady."

In due time they drove into that beautiful city of the dead, Woodland Cemetery, and were conducted to the physician's admirably kept family burial-place—a lot containing a modest monument, and some half a dozen headstones. A fresh mound of yellow earth told where Adele had been buried.

The doctor only gave the grave a single glance, and then turned away.

"It is useless to look further, here. The body has been removed!"

Judge Turnover groaned, and covered his face with his hands.

"This is horrible," he gasped—"not to see one's own child for many years, and then learn that it has been consigned to the pitiless mercies of the dissecting-knife."

"It is indeed sad," the physician responded, gravely.

"But, by persistent effort, we may yet be able to track and get possession of the body before it comes to the dissecting knife."

"How do you know the body has been disturbed?" Fox demanded. "The grave seems to be all right."

"There is where my eyes happen to be a little sharper than yours, detective," the physician replied. "Early last evening, you will remember, there was a short but sharp rain-storm. Well, if the grave had not been disturbed since that, you would see some effects on the mound yonder. As it is, the dirt appears to have been newly disturbed, and no rain has touched it since it was last disturbed; which is conclusive, to me, that the body was removed during the latter portion of last night."

"Thar, Foxy, the pill-dispenser is a better detective than either of us," Bob averred. "'Spect we better go an' sell out at auction dog cheap. Et behooves us to pay a visit to a certain place I knows of."

They left the cemetery; the doctor returning to his home in South street, and Bob, Fox, and the judge going to the latter's residence, where they partook of a sumptuous repast, and planned their next course of action.

It was proposed by Fox that Boss Bob return to his old street appearance, and pay a visit alone to the morgue, or receiving-house of the gang of grave-robbers, as one person could work, alone, better than several, without creating much suspicion.

But Bob argued that it would be next to impossible for him to gain an entrance to the secret dead-house of the gang, unless he was armed with a warrant, or could resort to some trick.

For some time the trio discussed various plans, and it was at last decided that Bob should represent himself as a medical student, in search of a subject, which would admit him to the morgue.

Accordingly, Fox, who appeared nearly as much interested in the case as the judge himself, took his departure, to pay another visit to the doctor in order to get a description of the dead woman.

In the mean time, Bob also left the judge's mansion, and took a car for the old city, getting out at Eighteenth and Market, and walking briskly through the latter thoroughfare, northward, until he came to a row of tenement buildings, of anything but a prepossessing aspect.

Mounting a flight of rickety stairs to the second floor, Bob continued along the hall until he came to a door upon the right-hand side, which he tried, and found unlocked.

Entering, he found himself in a large, plainly-furnished room, which served the purpose of kitchen, dining-room, parlor, and bedchamber. Though poor and shabby, the general aspect of everything was at least clean, and arranged to as good effect as possible.

Flora Bacon sat near the stove with the baby

in her lap, to whom she was feeding milk out of a nursing-bottle.

Near the table sat no less a personage than the factory superintendent, Mitchell, engaged in smoking a cigar, while he appeared in any thing but an enviable frame of mind.

Bob gave vent to a low whistle of astonishment, and turned to Flora, inquiringly.

"'Mornin' to you, Miss Flore," he said, doffing his elegant silk hat, and taking a seat. "Guess I've run inter a port whar I ain't needed, eh?"

"Why, Bob, is that really you?" the girl demanded, admiringly. "I didn't know you when you first came in, you were so changed. You look really like a fine gentleman."

"'Spect I am a reg'lar high-toner, ef ther truth waz only known. Didn't 'spect ter find Mickey Fresco Angel-oh Mitch heer, tho'," and the rejuvenated bootblack fired the superintendent a quizzical look.

"Oh! you needn't fear for him," Flora replied, indignantly. "His presence here is unwelcome, while yours is quite the reverse."

"Oh! that's it, is it? I say, Mickey, how do that sound to ye?" the youth demanded, tantalizingly. "Rather a nose-breaker, ain't it, fer sech a purty pill as you, even ef ye do aspire ter be a clown in a sarkus?"

"Miss Bacon is incensed with me because I offered her a good thing by proposing to make her my wife, but she will get bravely over that, and accede to my terms, if you will only have the good grace to take your leave, young man," was Mitchell's reply.

"Bet a clam your case is hopeless," Bob retorted, coolly. "Miss Flore, she knows what she's about, every once in a while, you bet, an' she's got a beau w'ot punches trip-slips on a hoss-car, an' he'd punch you, too, ef he know'd you was heer. Guess when Miss Flore sez I'm exkusable it'll be time enuff fer me ter vamoose."

"That's it, Bob; don't you desert me," Flora cried, her eyes flashing. "If Mr. Mitchell does not have the kindness to depart, before long, I shall call an officer. Because of his undesirable attentions to me, I was obliged to hand in my resignation at the factory yesterday, and now he has come to further annoy, and even threaten me. Thinking to influence me to marry him, he has even promised to inform me who my parents were, but I have refused him."

"Bully fer you, Miss Flore! Mickey Angel-oh ain't no shakes fer you, nohow. Jest you hang ter yer street-car beau—he's solid Muldoon, fer you." 'Sides, Mickey Angel-oh ain't allus a-goin' ter be a big superintendent o' a caliker mill. Beter clam I know er few p'intz thet'll help him ter a comfortable bunk down in Moya, an' as fer who yer parents wer', 'spect I know full's well as Mickey Angel-oh Mitch."

"Curse you, boy!" Mitchell cried, fiercely. "I'll break your head if you don't keep your mouth shut. You don't know a thing about that girl's parentage."

"Got any ducats to bet on that?" Bob demanded, coolly. "Guess ye've fergot I was behind ther bookcase, when ther madam was a-tellin' erbout it, hain't ye? 'Twixt you an' me, Mickey, yer jig's erbout up, an' ef I was you I'd either skip fer other climes, or go down ter

Moya an' give yerself up like er major. Slowly but surely ther net is weaving around you thet will finally constertoot yer windin' sheet."

Mitchell arose with an oath.

"I will not remain here, to listen to such nonsense, from a mere boy. The next time I see you on the street, sir, I'll have you arrested and sent up, for vagrancy," he cried, rising, haughtily. "Miss Bacon, what answer am I to have from you? Will you marry me, be blessed with my love, and learn the parentage that you have never known?—or will you choose my hatred, and live forever in ignorance of your birthright and title?"

"A thousand times better to remain forever in ignorance of my parentage, sir, than to marry one whom I could never love or even respect."

"Bravo! hurrah!" Bob cried, rising in his enthusiasm, tossing his hat into the air and catching it again on his head. "Thet 'ar was done up fu'st class—reg'ler Romeo an' Juleet style! Mickey Angel-oh, you'd make a fu'st-class heavy villain, ef ye was ter color up a little wi' caliker dyes; an' Flore, she'd knock ther spots clean off 'm Mrs. John Drew as a her'ine."

"Then look out for me!" Mitchell cried, shaking his fist at Miss Bacon, unmindful of the words of Boss Bob, "for you have not heard the last of me. I'll have you yet in spite of yourself!"

Then turning, he strode from the room, slamming the door behind him in no gentle way.

"I dunno, but I 'spect ef I was a little bigger, I'd lick the ugliness outer thet Mickey Angel-oh, jest fer fun," Bob declared. "He's a bad pill, but is gittin' purty near ter ther end o' his clothes-line. How's the baby?"

"Oh! it is getting along ever so nicely, and makes me scarcely any trouble," Flora replied, enthusiastically kissing the little stranger. "I really love it like I would a brother or sister."

"Well, thet ain't bad," Bob acknowledged, with a grin. "'Spect everybody wouldn't stop much at havin' you fer a brother or sister. Guess it cums natteral fer ye ter like ther little 'un, 'ca'se how et was yer own sister's baby."

"What! my sister's child—*this*?" Flora cried, greatly excited.

"'Spect it is," the Bootblack King replied. "Nothin' s'prisin' in it, either, compared wi' sum other p'int I've learned. Guess, mebbe, when dewelopments cums to a focus, you'll hev ter own me fer a brother, too."

"Really you speak in riddles, Bob, and I cannot understand them. Please explain for the satisfaction of my curiosity."

"Can't do that yet. Will 'splain all next time I come. Jest dropped in ter set yer thinkers a-goin', an' git yer anticipatin' masheen in workin' order. Stand ready ter cum wi' ther Nondescript, whenever I send him. It may be soon, an' et may be later, accordin' tew dewelopments. Good-by!"

And the next moment he was gone.

Mitchell, after leaving the tenement abode of Flora Bacon, returned at once to the calico factory, and found a stranger in the office, engaged in looking over the books.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. an-

grily; "who are you that you take so much liberty in looking over the books of this establishment?"

"I am the new superintendent of the mills, in the place of the man Mitchell," the stranger replied. "If you are he, you will find an explanatory note there on the table from Judge Turnover, sir."

With an oath Mitchell snatched up the letter, and tearing it open, read the following:

"SIR:—Your services as my superintendent and representative in business, are no longer needed, as I have learned of your villainous associations, which render you an unfit person to be in my employ. I would suggest that you take your leave at once, and save yourself trouble. JUDGE TURNOVER."

Without a word the displaced villain quitted the office for the street; but when here, his disappointment and rage found vent in a ready flow of curses.

"It is the work of that accursed boy, Boss Bob, again," he hissed, white with passion; "through him I have lost this position, and mayhap my liberty. But, curse them, I will be revenged on both him and the judge. It must be a bold game to be successful, but I shall play to win. The boy shall die this time, for a certainty, and there is another ready way to strike Turnover that will either bring me back my situation, or a cash equivalent."

He hurried at once to Madam Fayette's Eighth street establishment, and found the madam seated in her private parlor, engaged in perusing a letter; but she looked up, with an inquiring expression on her face, as she saw his evident anger.

"I've lost my situation through the infernal bootblack," Mitchell burst forth, as he entered. "I have just received my discharge papers from Turnover. What is to be done? Through that boy, we are all liable to get ourselves into an unenviable scrape."

"Only you, I and McFadden," the madam replied, evenly. "Frothingham has skipped for New York, *en route* for London, accompanied by the rest of the boys. He says London offers a safer retreat for him, as there was a prospect of things getting too hot for him here. He didn't forget to take my jewelry along with him, neither, nor the contents of my cash-box. I told you once I was suspicious of him."

Mitchell seated himself, with a growl.

"I care not—let him go. If we take care of ourselves, we shall do well. Things are working in the devil's way, all around. I visited the Bacon miss, this morning, and she refused me again."

The madam laughed.

"I thought likely, by the temper you are in, she confessed. "Maybe if you would try the mother, instead of the daughter, you'd have better success."

"Pshaw! I can have you later, after I've married the girl, and through her got a piece of Turnover's fortune. There's one thing flat!"

"What is that?"

"Why, we must play a game card, now—a card that leads to wealth, and at the same time leads to protection."

"I do not understand you; how do you mean?"

"I will explain. We must capture this girl."

and imprison her, in some place, and hold her there. In this way, we can make terms with Turnover, and at the same time he and his young tool, Boss Bob, will not give us over to the authorities until they can secure the girl. In this way we can work upon the judge for a big amount, when we will skip out, and let him have his girl."

"Your plan may work," the madam admitted, toying with the letter she held. "But there are ten chances to one it will not. Turnover will never give up his ducats until he has thoroughly tested every other way of getting the advantage."

"Well, it's our best hope to risk, at any rate. We shall either win largely, or lose all and go to jail and that comes within one of staring us in the face, now. As to the boy—"

"I have a plan of getting effectually rid of him," the madam interposed. "To-morrow is Pennsylvania day at the Centennial, and it shall be his last day to live."

"We ought to have made sure of him the other time we had him. Then we would not have been betrayed, and I should yet have my position," Mitchell growled.

"Well, we *didn't* do it, and there is no use of crying over spilt milk. Come closer, and I will inform you of my plans in regard to the disposal of the bootblack."

Accordingly they moved their chairs closer together and in lowered voices discussed dark schemes which boded no good to either Boss Bob, or Flora Bacon. A well-matched pair were the two plotters, as regards scheming, and be it not said to their credit, either, for both were educated, intelligent, and fitted for a far better existence, than that which they led.

CHAPTER XI.

MALONEY, SR., AND BOSS BOB.

IN the mean time, Boss Bob returned to the Turnover mansion, and found that Fox had already arrived there ahead of him from his visit to the doctor's.

He placed a written description of the dead woman, in Bob's hands, and the boy perused it attentively.

"Reckon that's all's necessary," he decided. "'Spect I kin reckernize ther corpus at once. I'll waltz around and pay Paddy McFadden a visit, to-night, jist at the top av the avenin', so I will."

It being well along in the day, and having some other arrangements to complete, he once more took leave of Turnover and Fox and returned to town.

The undertaking establishment of Patrick McFadden was located in a small two-story house in Buttonwood street, and here the wily proprietor was wont to carry on all branches of his trade. He supplied funerals with coffins and hearses, at shortest notice; received bodies and kept them iced until time for interment, and also preserved bodies by the embalmer's art.

It was no unusual occurrence to see half a dozen or more coffins enter his place, or leave it, every day, and altogether he did a rushing business at handling the dead.

The lower story of his house had a front opening of double doors, so that he could drive into the building.

Mr. McFadden was also said, by his neighbors, to be quite a philanthropist in his way, as when bodies were sent to him to ice, and never called for, as was often the case, he would with unselfish generosity give them a decent burial in his own lot, in an out-of-town cemetery.

Thus the record of P. McFadden stood without reproach, so far as the general public knew.

About dusk, that evening, Boss Bob entered Buttonwood street from off Broad and strode along for some time, sharply scanning each frowning, gloomy building, until he came to the one with the double doors opening off the street.

"'Spect this must be the place," he muttered, pausing long enough to light a fresh cigar. "Don't smell very cadaverous, neither. Wonder if here's where they keep a feller's carcass until wanted? Ugh! Kinder dread this job, tho' I guess no ghosts ain't got er grudge ag'in' me, so I needn't be afeard. The next thing's ter find out ef a feller can get in."

Another door besides the double ones, opened into the building, and ascending the steps Bob gave the bell a prompt jerk. Then, while waiting, he adjusted his spectacles, and looked as near like a young student as he knew how, which was not a remarkable personification.

The door was opened, directly, by the proprietor, in person—a thin, pinched-faced son of the Emerald sod, with an unmistakable Celtic face, and shaggy, brick-colored hair.

He was attired in a semi-gown and broad-brim hat of the order that to this day distinguishes the Quaker citizens from the other classes of the Philadelphians, in many instances, in addition to his other accouterments, and smoked a stubby clay pipe of the grimest order.

He regarded Bob sharply with his little gray eyes, as if suspicious of him.

"Well, what does thee want?" he demanded, holding the door only wide enough open to admit his head and shoulders. "Whc is he, and what does he want?"

"'Sh!" Bob said, in a lowered tone. "I am a medical student, and have come to see you on important biz."

Patrick McFadden, or Quaker Pat, as he was often called, nodded, and at once admitted Bob into a hall, closing the door behind him.

"Shure it's a lucky time yez have come," he said, returning to his native brogue. "Waz it afther a subject ye'z come?"

"Correct! you couldn't have guessed with more accuracy," Bob replied, toning up his speech the best he knew how.

"I am in need of a subject—a female, preferred."

Without a word the undertaker led the way to an inner office, and opened a big book that lay upon the desk, handing Bob a pencil at the same time.

"Pl'ase to sign yer name an' risidence there," McFadden said, "an' thin I'll be afther showin' yez some fine subjects as iver it done yer eyes good to rust on, so I will."

Without demur Bob scrawled down the following signature:

"Robert Maloney, D. D., LL. D., M. D.," and gave his address at the Turnover place, after which he followed McFadden up a flight of stairs to the floor above; thence through an apartment used for the storage of coffins and funeral appurtenances, into a second room, which proved to be the place where subjects were kept.

The room was dark, the windows being curtained, but McFadden lit a jet of gas, and plenty of light was afforded for the purpose.

The apartment was uncarpeted, and there were several trap-doors in the floor. Also, there were a number of tables scattered about the room, covered with marble slabs and upon one of these lay the stark, rigid form of a dead man, yet attired in the robes that had clothed his body in the grave from which he had been stolen.

At sight of this, Boss Bob's hair began to feel a little like rising on end, but he choked off his uneasiness, with a strong effort, and went up and examined the corpse, coolly, after which he turned to McFadden.

"That one does not suit me," he said, with a shake of the head. "Have you no females who have died of complicated diseases?"

"Shure an' it's meself as has the very one yez want," the undertaker replied. "A fine young leddy was captured last night who had died of some unknown disease, an' I put her at once in the pickle, so't she'd be afther kapin'. I can haul her out o' ther pickle, ef yez would be afther seein' her."

"No, you needn't mind. By your answering a few questions, I can tell if it is the subject I've had my eye on. It came from Woodland Cemetery, eh?"

"Faith, an' I'm av the opinion it did," the Irishman replied, with a wink and a grin.

"And was sold to you by a man by the name of Frothingham?" Bob queried.

McFadden nodded in the affirmative.

"That's the very jewel!" he acknowledged, with an ogre's chuckle.

"Then that is the subject I want. What is the price of it, safely delivered to my address, in a coffin and box, as if it had recently come off from the Express cars?"

McFadden scratched his head a minute, thoughtfully, and then replied:

"Since you have come to me for the first time, I'll let yez have it for fifty dollars."

"It's a bargain! You may deliver it to my address during the night, and the money will be waiting for you."

Then Bob took his leave, fully satisfied with the extent of his visit.

"Swaller me fer a clam ef et didn't nigh dislocate my jaw, ter wrassle wi' thet high-toned talk," he muttered, when he once more gained the street. "'Spect no langwage ain't so natteral as a feller's own, an' then, I wa'n't brought up on ther dixshunary. Guess we'll git hold of the body all right now, an' Turnover he'll have ter fut ther bill, as he's got ther rocks. Things ar' gittin' kinder ship-shape, arter all. Flora she's found, an' Adele she's found, an' now ther next thing is ter find me.

Ef old Terrance'll cum down an' do the fair thing, mebbe I'll turn out ter be a duke or a duchess, or suthin' like that, even ef I ain't a Turnover. Turnovers ar' a good stand-by, tho', when a feller's hungry, an' so is Bacon. Guess I may as well take a scull down ter Point Breeze an' see Terrance early to-morrer, an' find out my desterny."

Accordingly, having some cash left out of the purchase of his clothing, he went to a second-rate but respectable hotel and turned in for the night, knowing Turnover and Fox would receive the body of Adele when it came, without any of his assistance.

Early in the morning he was up and stirring, as were upward of a million and a quarter of other humans, on this eventful Pennsylvania's day, at the Centennial.

First of all he went to the mayor's office and received a permit for the New Gas-works, after which he walked briskly toward Point Breeze, which he reached in due time, and gained admission. He was not long in finding the object of his search, Terrance Maloney, perched upon the end of an up-turned tar barrel, before the roaring furnaces, looking black and grimy as any son of Africa.

A scrawny, withered-up little Irishman, was Maloney, Sr., with hard, bony features that wore a habitual bull-dog expression, and eyes that were small and fiery, from an over-excess of strong drink.

He gave a grunt of recognition, as Boss Bob approached.

"Oh! so ye know me, do ye?" our hero demanded, bridging his glasses upon his nose, and surveying the elder Maloney, critically. "Well, what d'ye think o' my style anyhow?"

"To tha divil wid tha sthyle," Maloney, Sr., replied, gruffly. "Phat's struck ye, boy?"

"Oh! I'm runnin' fer ambassador ter Injy," Bob replied, twirling his cane. "Give up black-in' boots. 'Spect I'll git to be President o' ther U. S., mebbe."

"Prisident av purgathory, ye young omadhaun. Have yez a stray quarther about yer duds, now?"

"Bet yer gas-shop I hev," was the independent reply of the boy. "Got lots o' sech trinkets about my duds. What of it?"

"Because, boy, ye can be afther takin' tha mug ye see yonder on tha top ov the barrel, an' goin' fer a quart av ale, to the furst saloon around the corner."

"Oh! no—I guess not," Bob retorted, loftily. "I ain't in ther bizness o' carryin' drinks. Et ain't becomin' uv a Prime Minister. Here's a quarter for you; go get your own swill."

The senior Maloney did not need a second invitation, and seizing the proffered quarter and the pitcher, he disappeared, soon returning with a foaming pitcher of the Irishman's favorite beverage.

"It's a fine laddy buck ye are, b'ye," the senior Maloney declared, as he seated himself, and began to sip the ale. "An' shure, is it raley so yez ar' runnin' for Prisident, Robert?"

"'Spect not, old man. I was only givin' ye a little taffy on a stick—moonlight on a clam-shell, yer see. Struck er bonanza, tho'—a reg'lar Buffler Bill affair, too."

"A bonanza, is it? An' shure, phat's a bonanza, Robert? I can nary understand yez."

"Well, I'll tell you," Boss Bob said, presenting the senior Maloney with a poor cigar, while with true philanthropy he lit a good one himself. "You see, there's a little case w'ot wants a young feller ter step in an' fill er famerly vacancy, an' I've had kinder of an itchin' that I was ther right lad in ther right place. So I jest waltzed down here ter git ye ter tell me who I am?"

"Who the divil d'ye take yerself for, 'cept me own son?" Maloney, Sr., demanded. "Faith, an' it's moighty queer notions tha boys be gittin' inter their heads, nowadays. You're Bobby Maloney, to be sure, an' divil a won less."

"You git out!" Bob retorted, snapping his fingers contemptuously. "Ye can't stuff that down me, Terrance, worth a clam. I know better, ye see. 'Spect I orter, when you're a reg'lar old Glinegal bog-trotter, ther old woman's pure sauer-kroust an' lager, an' limburger, an' I'm o' the reg'lar fine-wool Vermont stock. Can't make it appear natteral, nohow, an' so ye may as well tell me who I am, and be done with it."

"Will ye heer the loikes, now?" Maloney, Senior, cried, beginning to wax wroth. "Heer it's a good twinty yeers I've been rearin' yez up; an now, faith, yez would like to make yerself some won else, in the bargain. By me soul, I niver heard tha aqual av it, at all."

"Can't help it, Teddy, old boy. It's no use o' yer gittin' mad, fer I kin lick a good dozen sech coak-heavers as you aire. 'Spect ye never know'd that, mebbe. It's a fac', all the same. No use o' tryin' ter make a green sprig o' Erin's shammyrock outen a reg'lar Yankee peony, nuther. Cum down, now, Teddy, an' do ther squar' thing by tellin' me whar ye picked me up, an' ef I make a raise out o' the thing, I'll make et interestin' fer ye—start ye in bizness, fer instance, an' hand in yer name at ther next State Convention as a nomernee fer Guvnor."

"Go 'long wid ye, boy! It's pokin' fun at me yez ar' now."

"No I ain't, honest Injun!" Bob reassured. "Jest you come down an' tell me ther source I sprung frum, an' ef I don't do ther fair thing by you, prowidin' I make a strike myself, ye can sell me out at ther rate o' two cents a quart, fer spiled oysters. Cum now, jest give us a good lift fer onst."

Maloney, Sr., contemplated the bottom of the pitcher, which he had just succeeded in emptying, with a thoughtful gaze.

"There be a little duck of a saloon on Swan-son street," he said, "that could be bought wid all the stock an' fixtures for a hundred dollars. If ye'll b'y tha loikes o' that for me, Bobby, b'ye, I'll be afther tellin' ye wha' yez be afther wantin' to know."

"Well, I guess not," Bob retorted. "I ain't investin' in rum-shops myself. Tell ye what I'll do. Ef ye'll tell me who'er my parents, an' who ye got me from, an' go with me an' swear to et, if necessary, I'll give yer all ther swag I've got salted away—a matter o' fifty cents,

wi' ther promise ye shall have fifty times fifty, if by yer information I turn out to be who I think I am. Thet's fair now, an' et's every cent ye can git out o' me. Ef ye'd rather keep yer secret than ter hev twenty-five U. S. dollars, go ter blazes, that's all."

"Let me see, b'ye," the gas-man muttered, counting over his tarry fingers, a doubtful expression upon his face. "How many quarts would thet buy of ale, at a shilling a quart?"

"Two hundred quarts—enough to secure you the deed of a lot in a paupers' cemetery or a berth down at Moya," Bob replied, in disgust, for he was himself a teetotaler.

"Is two hundred quarts all?" the elder Maloney murmured. "By me soul, that would do me but a week, in hot weather. But never mind, b'ye. I'll not be hard wid ye. I'll be afther makin' up me mind the day, an' if I conclude ter let ye have yer own way, it's a visit I'll pay yez to-night, afther dark."

"No—not then; wait till to-morrow night, and then call around at Judge Turnover's; I'll be there."

Then Bob bade adieu to his foster-father, as he now believed he really was, and struck for the Centennial, intent on having a holiday, and viewing for the fiftieth time the sights and scenes within the great Exposition.

He had arrived as far as the inside of the inclosure, near the great fountain between Machinery Hall and the Main Building, when he felt a desperate tugging at his coat-sleeve and turned in some surprise to find himself in the presence of Miss Cora Castle, Madam Fayette's pretty millinery clerk.

"Oh! I know who you are," she said, still retaining a hold upon his arm, with girlish impetuosity. "I recognized you the instant I saw you, despite your fine dress; and now, as I've got my walking-papers from the madam, and am off on a holiday, I forthwith appoint you my cavalier and escort for the day."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

THE girl was so positive, that Boss Bob seemed inclined to accept the inevitable, and offering his arm, they strolled along out the Belmont avenue of the grounds, to get out of the dense crowds that already swarmed within the Centennial inclosure.

"Dunno ef I orter hitch onter you or not," he observed, scanning the girl and her elegant costume, critically. "You let them cusses smuggle me out o' Fayette's house, and I'd 'a' been meat fer bologna, by this time, ef et hadn't been fer Fox and 'Script."

"Oh, Bob! I was really powerless to help you," the girl replied, earnestly, "or I should have done so. The madam shut me up in a room, and threatened to murder me, if I betrayed them."

"Mebbe," Bob accepted, rather doubtfully. "Annyhow, ye wouldn't make er reg'lar Buffle Bill heerine, or you'd a-sailed right in, shirt-sleeves an' stockin'-feet, murder or no murder, an' reskued me, in ther midst o' a tabler o' colored fire."

Cora Castle laughed.

"Well, I see you are inclined to think I'm a

bad girl, because I worked for a viper," she said, "but such is not the case. I'm every bit as good, as when I used to be your Sally, and know a bit more, too. To prove that I am loyal to you, I'm going to tell you something that will open your eyes."

"All right. Sail in. I'm allus open fer eye-openers," the Bootblack King replied. "Ef ye can prove ye are on my side, 'stead o' Madam Fayette's, all right; an' ef ye can't you've got ter bounce."

"Very well, I will bounce, if I cannot prove my fidelity. You see, madam and I disagreed because of the nonpayment of wages that were due me, and she told me to skip out, and make room for another. So I skipped, fetchin' with me some of madam's secrets, which I have acquired, from time to time. Here is the latest plan to git rid of you. I heard the madam and Mitchell discussing it, this morning before I left. It was expected by them that you could be found at the Centennial, to-night, when the fireworks come off, as nearly every one who can raise a half-dollar will be here to witness the display. A spotter will be put on your track, to keep near watch of you, and about the time the fireworks begin, a cabman will come to you, in great haste, telling you that he was sent with his conveyance to bear you to the Turnover mansion, where Judge Turnover lies stricken with an attack of apoplexy, and wishes to see you before he dies. Of course you follow the coachman, get into his close carriage, and find yourself a prisoner in the hands of Mitchell and the madam, with no prospects of ever seeing the light of day again."

Bob gave vent to a whistle of surprise.

"So *that's* their game is it? Well, we'll see about that, mebbe. I got out o' their trap once, and I reckon I ain't a-goin' ter fall inter it ag'in. Much obliged ter ye fer ther p'int o' the case, Sally, an' we'll take a look around the Centennial, afore we go to Turnover's ter plot ag'in' ther madam an' Mickey Angel-oh Mitch. Guess I orter stand ther treats, hedn't I, too?"

And with the liberality of a young king of finance, he fairly loaded his pretty and affable companion down with presents and candies and so-forth, until she was forced to beg of him to desist. They first visited the Main Building with its acres of wondrous exhibits, but finding it too crowded, crossed over to Machinery Hall, and inspected the ponderous Corliss Engine, the looms, the ivory working machinery, and hundreds of other novelties, after which they visited the glass works, and viewed the marvelous workings and artistic modeling processes of that wonderful art.

Miss Cora was delighted, for with hundreds of other native Philadelphians, she had never before visited the Exposition.

"If I wish to get married, I'd just be crazy to have some of these beautiful designs of glassware," Cora said, squeezing Bob's arm, suggestively. "Aren't they superb?"

"Dunno about that," Bob replied, taking off his "plug" hat, to give his head a dig. "'Spect I'd ruther hev silver an' gold. Glass will do very well fer common folks, but ambassydors never stummick nothin' but gold an' silver. There's 'Lysses Grant—they say he can't take

his tea unless et's in a gold cup set wi' di'monds. 'Spect that will be my fix too, when I git as big as 'Lysses. Don't contemplate steppin' off, do ye, Sal?"

"Yes, I do," the girl replied, merrily, "an' I've got my man picked out, too."

"Phew! Who is he?"

"Why, you of course, you goose! Who else, do you suppose I'd have, but you?"

"Dunno," Bob answered, dubiously. "Didn't know I was marketed yet. 'Spect you're gittin' ahead o' yer calculations, ain't you?"

"Not a bit of it, Bob. We used to be lover-like toward each other, when our positions in life were relatively not so very different—you blacked boots, and I scrubbed sidewalks. I propose we continue the same relations toward each other now. I'm an orphan, and I like you, and it's your duty to like me and take care of the widows and orphans. What do you say: won't you have me, if I'll have you?"

"'Spect I'll have to cogitate on that. Guess I ain't old enuff ter assume famerly 'sponsibilities yet. Dunno much 'bout wimmen an' gals, anyhow—never hed enny luck a-shinin' around 'em. Got more slop-buckets an' scrubbin' brushes fired at me than ever I did luvin' glances, enuff sight. 'Spect I never was cut out for a mash, nohow."

"But, I like you, just the same," the girl persisted, teasingly, "an' you've either got to make me Mrs. Boss Bob, or I'll sue you for breach of promise."

"Sue an' be hanged! Guess I can't be drove. Tell you what I'll do. I'll consider, an' ef I don't conklude ter take ye, mebbe I can git ye a job, over at Turnover's."

"Good! Do so, and that will suit me just as well," the girl said, with a laugh. "Maybe I can get Turnover himself. Anything so that I get a nice, stylish man, who has the scrip to support me with."

"Bet a clam ye ken't git ther judge," Bob muttered, under his breath. "He's hed one attack, an' I guess it soured on his hands, an' he won't be apt ter want ernuther blizzard."

A close carriage stood, that evening, upon Elm avenue, near the foot of George's Hill, just as the grand display of fireworks was about to begin—not one carriage alone, but a hundred or more vehicles of every description laden with those who had come to witness the display, without paying the admission fee to the grounds.

The first mentioned, however, was a stylish conveyance, to which was attached a stylish span of horses, and the driver's seat was unoccupied.

Just about the same time that the signal-rocket was fired, three figures pressed through the crowd, and approached the carriage—being no other persons than Judge Turnover, Fox, the Ferret, and Boss Bob.

The latter sprung to the driver's seat, and as soon as he had his two companions entered the vehicle, than he wheeled the horses about, and drove down the avenue as rapidly as the density of the crowd would permit.

No quicker had Turnover and Fox entered the carriage, than they closed the door behind them and drew revolvers, for, as Bob had warned

them, they found themselves in the presence of Madam Fayette and Mitchell.

"Quiet, now," the New York detective said, sternly. "Don't dare to make the least resistance, or I will call in the police to help me. You are my prisoners until I have orders from Judge Turnover, here, for your release."

"In the name of Fury, what does this mean?" Mitchell demanded, excitedly—and both he and Madam Fayette shrunk to the opposite side of the coach, as if to escape. But the deadly gaze of Fox's revolvers caused them to desist from any such attempt. The tableau within the carriage, which was lighted, was not, however, visible to the outside crowd of people, because the windows were closely curtained.

"It means," Judge Turnover said, sternly, "that your villainous schemes against Boss Bob have been nipped in the bud, and that you are now at my mercy, with the gates of a prison staring you in the face. All your criminal secrets are known to me, and you have me to look to for hope of mercy, as it is in my power to consign you to the dungeon you so richly deserve, or to set you at liberty. Which I shall do, I do not yet know; for the present you both go with me to my home, to await my decision. God knows, I never calculated that I should have to make a criminal captive of one who was once my wife."

Madam Fayette did not reply, but sinking back upon the seat, buried her face in her hands, and began to weep.

Mitchell also resumed his seat, with a growl, seeming inclined to accept the inevitable, rather than make a useless resistance.

Under Boss Bob's skillful driving, the carriage soon reached the judge's mansion, and the Boot-black King dismounted and opened the door of the conveyance.

"Here we are, gents an' ladies," he said, with a comical bow. "Turnover, now, an' tumble out, as fast as you please."

Fox and the judge got out, and motioned for the madam and Mitchell to follow, which they did.

Then all parties entered the mansion, and came to a halt in the parlor, where a strange tableau was presented.

A coffin was mounted upon stools, in the center of the room, and within it, in a costly shroud of lace and flowers, reposed the remains of her who had been Adele Frothingham.

Near by, holding her dead sister's baby, sat Flora Bacon, with tear-stained face. Madam Fayette took in the situation at a glance, and with a wild shriek, she staggered back and would have fallen, had not Fox caught her, and supported her to a sofa, where, when he had laid her down, he made the discovery that blood was oozing from her nose and mouth; a few awful spasms followed, and then the heart ceased to beat.

The sight of the wreck her unmotherly career

had wrought had probably been more than she could bear, and the shock had caused her life-thread the sudden strain that had snapped it in twain.

Fox gently made the announcement, and Judge Turnover and Flora knelt beside the lifeless form with tearful eyes, Boss Bob standing near, with a sad face.

Though he felt like crying, the boy knew not whether to do so or not; as yet he did not know for certain that he was in any way related to either the judge or the dead woman. With a nod to Mitchell to follow, Fox led the way into the adjoining back parlor, where they waited for the judge and Bob to join them, which they speedily did.

Gazing gravely at his treacherous former employee, the judge was silent for a few minutes.

After awhile he said:

"Michael Mitchell, I give you your liberty to leave—to get out of this city, as fast as you can. I know full well this is not what you deserve, but, I am inclined to be merciful. Through this lad, who is properly enough called Boss Bob, I have been restored, in life and in death, three of the members of my long-lost family, and I am thankful. Though my eldest child and my sinning wife are dead, life has a brighter prospect for me, in the fact that I still have my younger daughter to cheer and comfort me in my old age. Go! If you are found in Philadelphia after to-morrow noon, you shall pay to the full the penalty for your crimes and dishonor. Go!"

Glad of the opportunity offered, Mitchell took his leave, and was never thereafter seen in the Quaker City.

On the following day, Terrance Maloney came to the front, and confirmed Boss Bob's belief that he was the missing Harry Turnover, by the statement that he had received Bob from a whaling-ship captain, and had since that time been paid a small sum, annually, by Madam Fayette, to keep Bob in ignorance of his parentage.

This cleared the matter up. Maloney was liberally rewarded, while the judge was happy in the possession of two of his lost children.

The dead were buried later, side by side, and a costly monument erected to mark their last resting-place.

Miss Cora Castle was adopted into the Turnover family, at Boss Bob's request, and the prospects seem to indicate that she and Fox will make a match, the latter having been appointed superintendent of the Turnover mills, under Harry—i. e. Boss Bob.

Of course Boss Bob no longer belongs to the "perfection," but he still has a wide acquaintance among his old pals, and in his new position in life, finds time to often give them a deserved "lift."

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